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Transforming Book Culture in China, 1600–2016

Edited by
Daria Berg and Giorgio Strafella

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Manuskriptangebote bitte an:
Prof. Dr. Christine Haug, christine.haug@germanistik.uni-muenchen.de
Prof. Dr. Vincent Kaufmann, vincent.kaufmann@unisg.ch

Redaktion Englisch: Caroline Mason
Übersetzung Vorwort: Anita Vrzina

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Contents

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Daria Berg and Giorgio Strafella
St.Gallen
16 October 2016

From the General Editors

Dear Reader,

As a Yearbook of the International Society for Book Studies (IBG), *Kodex* has pursued a dual goal for the past six years. Firstly, using interdisciplinary approaches, we have tried to situate and describe the past, present and future development of the book medium in different contexts that are relevant today. To this end, *Kodex* has addressed and discussed issues such as the digital library (*Kodex 1*), bestsellers (*Kodex 2*), the destruction of books (*Kodex 3*), plagiarism (*Kodex 4*), and the book in the Humanities (*Kodex 5*). We are delighted by the overall very positive feedback and reviews. *Kodex* has established itself as a dynamic, original publication that has succeeded in filling the gap at the intersection of Book Studies and Cultural Studies.

We would like to build on this success and ensure a more systematic implementation of the second aim of the IBG: on the one hand, the internationalisation of the research topics and discussions in the Book Studies and, on the other hand, the expansion of the range of topics discussed in *Kodex*. Hence, *Kodex 6* focuses on the topic of book culture in China and for the first time it consists exclusively of contributions in English from China itself or by researchers active in an international academic field. We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to Professor Daria Berg, Chair Professor of Chinese Culture and Society at the University of St. Gallen, and Dr Giorgio Strafella, Senior Research Fellow in Chinese Culture and Society at the University of St. Gallen, the guest editors of *Kodex 6* which offers 'first-hand insight' into what is for us the mostly foreign but unquestionably exciting field of Chinese book culture.

We wish to continue to develop *Kodex* in this direction in the future. Beside an issue on the topic of 'censorship in democratic societies', we are already planning another issue on book culture in the Islamic cultural space which will also include contributions in English. We are hoping that you, dear reader, find this development equally exciting and that the effective internationalisation of *Kodex* meets with your approval. We thank you sincerely for your confidence.

The General Editors:
Prof. Dr. Christine Haug
Prof. Dr. Vincent Kaufmann

Vorwort der Herausgeber

Lieber *Kodex*-Leserinnen und -Leser,

Als Jahrbuch der Internationalen Buchwissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft (IBG) verfolgt *Kodex* jetzt seit sechs Jahren ein doppeltes Ziel. Erstens versuchen wir, die Entwicklungen des Mediums ›Buch‹ in verschiedenen Kontexten, in denen ein starker Aktualitätsbezug vorhanden ist, interdisziplinär zu verorten und zu beschreiben, mit Blick sowohl auf die Zukunft des Buches als auch auf seine Gegenwart sowie seine Vergangenheit. In diesem Sinne wurden in den letzten Jahren in *Kodex* Themen wie die ›Digitale Bibliothek‹ (*Kodex* 1), ›Bestseller‹ (*Kodex* 2), ›Buchvernichtung‹ (*Kodex* 3), ›Plagiat‹ (*Kodex* 4) und das ›Geisteswissenschaftliche Buch‹ (*Kodex* 5) aufgegriffen und diskutiert. Wir können uns an den insgesamt sehr positive Rückmeldungen und Rezensionen erfreuen. *Kodex* hat sich als eine dynamische, originelle Publikation etabliert, der es gelingt, eine Lücke an der Schnittstelle zwischen Buch- und Kulturwissenschaften zu schliessen.

An diesen Erfolg möchten wir anknüpfen, um auch den zweiten Anspruch der IBG systematischer umzusetzen: einerseits die Internationalisierung der buchwissenschaftlichen Forschungsdiskussionen und andererseits die Erweiterung der in *Kodex* bearbeiteten Themenfelder. Deshalb widmet sich *Kodex* 6 dem Thema ›Buchkultur in China‹ und besteht erstmals ausschliesslich aus englischsprachigen Beiträgen, die aus China selbst stammen oder durch in einem internationalen wissenschaftlichen Feld aktiven Forschern verfasst wurden. Herausgegeben von Prof. Daria Berg und Dr. Giorgio Strafella (Lehrstuhl Chinesische Kultur, Universität St.Gallen), denen wir für ihren begeisterten Einsatz herzlich danken möchten, bietet *Kodex* 6 eine ›Ersthand-Einsicht‹ in die uns meist fremde, aber zweifelsohne spannende chinesische Buchkultur.

Es würde uns sehr freuen, wenn wir *Kodex* in diese Richtung weiter für Sie entwickeln dürfen. Neben einer weiteren Nummer zum Thema ›Zensur in demokratisch verfassten Gesellschaften‹ planen wir auch schon eine Nummer zur ›Buchkultur im islamischen Kulturraum‹, die auch (wenigstens in Teilen) aus englischsprachigen Beiträgen bestehen wird. Wir hoffen dass auch Sie, liebe Leserinnen und Leser, diese Entwicklung spannend finden und dieser tatsächlichen Internationalisierung von *Kodex* zustimmen können. Für Ihr Vertrauen möchten wir uns herzlich bedanken.

Die Herausgeber:
Prof. Dr. Christine Haug
Prof. Dr. Vincent Kaufmann

Transforming Book Culture in China, 1600–2016: Introduction

Daria Berg and Giorgio Strafella

This volume explores the transformation of China's book culture, offering a roadmap to the world of books, literature and publishing in the country today. It sheds new light on how modern and contemporary Chinese society has produced, re-invented and valorised the book in its various printed, hand-written and electronic forms. Bringing together contributions from fourteen scholars from Greater China, Europe, the United States and Australia, this volume offers cutting-edge research on publishing, reading, collecting and selling books in China. The time frame for the present volume extends from the late Ming 明 dynasty (1368–1644) to the Qing 清 dynasty (1644–1911), the Republican period (1911–1949), Mao's China (1949–1976), Deng Xiaoping's era of reforms (1979–present) and the postsocialist period up until China's ongoing rise to superpower status. The essays cut across the fields of literature, history, media studies and sociology.

The term 'postsocialist' describes for our present purposes a country where 'socialist institutions such as state planning, collective work units, guaranteed job allocation, housing distribution, free healthcare, and fixed pricing have all disappeared but residual socialist mentalities, sensibilities, and hierarchies continue to impact on people's behavior'.[1] However, Party-state organs and authorities that played an all-encompassing role in book publishing and cultural production tout court during the socialist era retain significant power in post-1978 society. Party-state leaders also never ceased to 'uphold' socialist principles with regard to 'public opinion guidance' and literary writing. It is therefore worth stressing how the post-socialist condition is one of 'ideological contradiction and uncertainty' and the term itself is 'intentionally residual, since the historical situation that it is intended to capture conceptually is highly ambiguous in its characteristics'.[2]

While this volume mainly focuses on reform-era postsocialist China, it also seeks to show how contemporary phenomena are rooted in the country's history. By including contributions dealing with books, literature, print culture and the publishing industry from the seventeenth to the twenty-first centuries, the volume aims to highlight elements of historical continuity as well as the more obvious discontinuities, to show how China's book culture has developed in a variety of genres, media and institutions.

1 Michel Hockx: *Internet Literature in China*. New York: Columbia University Press 2015, p. 2; see also pp. 12–18. On postsocialist Chinese culture, see also Daria Berg: A New Spectacle in China's Mediasphere. A Cultural Reading of a Web-Based Reality Show from Shanghai. *China Quarterly* 205 (2011), pp. 133–51.

2 Arif Dirlik: Postsocialism? Reflections on 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics'. In: Arif Dirlik, Maurice Meisner (eds): *Marxism and the Chinese Experience.* Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe 1989, p. 364.

China's Print Culture and Publishing Industry in Historical Perspective

China prides itself on being the cradle of book culture.[3] The opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics showcased China's ancient and modern achievements, including movable-type printing, and started with an act that turned the stage into a digital scroll. As the blank scroll unfolded, dancers inscribed it with calligraphy by moving their bodies like brushes. The scene combined the modern media of digital publishing, ancient Chinese art and performance art. It also conveyed a sense of continuity between antiquity and the present while pointing to the central role of books, writing and literary composition in China's cultural empire past and present.[4]

Books have played an important political, social and cultural role in Chinese culture throughout history. Chinese writings have come in the form of oracle bone inscriptions, stone inscriptions, silk scrolls, bamboo slips tied together, woodblock printing, movable-type and lead printing, handwritten manuscripts, and, most recently, digital writing including blogs, microblogs, ebooks and webzines. Handwritten pages, carved inscriptions, printed pages and webpages have functioned as the vehicles of poetry, prose and political ideas; high-brow and low-brow literature; officially sanctioned and state-promoted works of literature, history and philosophy, and also of the unofficial writings of popular and vernacular cultures.[5]

China boasts the invention of the art of paper-making as well as that of printing by means of both woodblock and movable type.[6] The First Emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi 秦始皇帝 (r. 221-210 BCE), made it clear that he understood the power of the written word and its importance as a political tool. Ever since he allegedly burned books and buried scholars alive in 213 BCE, Chinese writers have lived with the fear or fact of censorship. The imperial court supervised official publishing, which consisted mainly of the production of officially ordained works of history and anthologies for imperial libraries. In late imperial times both the court and local officials banned certain books, yet the rise of a commercial publishing industry starting from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries onwards rendered official prohibition ineffective.[7]

Literary composition opened the doors to the social and political elite in China from the Sui 隋 dynasty (581–618) until the twentieth century. From the late sixth century until 1905—just six years before the end of imperial China—the scholar-official elite who filled the

3 Joseph P. McDermott: *A Social History of the Chinese Book: Books and Literati Culture in Late Imperial China*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press 2006, p. 9.

4 On the Beijing 2008 Olympics opening ceremony, see Geremie R. Barmé: China's Flat Earth: History and 8 August 2008. *China Quarterly* 197 (2009), pp. 64–86

5 On vernacular culture, see Glen Dudbridge: *Books, Tales and Vernacular Culture: Selected Papers on China*. Leiden: Brill 2005; Daria Berg: *Women and the Literary World in Early Modern China*. London: Routledge 2013, p. 2. See also Chapter Fourteen.

6 McDermott, *Social History*, p. 9

7 Timothy Brook: *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China*. Berkeley: University of California Press 1998, p. 171.

ranks of the administration were mostly recruited through a three-tiered examination system (*keju* 科舉). In the examinations men could rise in the imperial meritocracy by proving their excellence in the composition of poetry, prose and philosophical debate. Literature and book culture counted among the emblems of China's scholar-official elite.[8]

Print culture in late imperial China mainly relied on the use of xylography, or woodblock printing, which had been invented and was in public use by the early eighth century.[9] The oldest surviving printed book, the *Jingang jing* 金剛經 (Diamond Sutra, Vajracchedikā), appeared in 868, predating the Gutenberg Bible (1455) by 587 years.[10] Some works, such as the Buddhist canon *Sanzang* 三藏 (Tripitaka), were also carved in stone.[11] By the eleventh century Chinese publishers were using a newly invented method—printing by movable type. Chapter Three in the present volume examines the importance of the religious and in particular Buddhist press in nineteenth and twentieth-century China.

Books traditionally belonged to the realm of men, as participating in the book culture of imperial China was one of the privileges of being a male scholar. Scholar-officials formed the 'sashed and gartered' (*shenjin* 紳衿, or *shenshi* 紳士) upper class or gentry. The way to climb 'up the ladder to the azure clouds' (*ping bu qing yun* 平步青雲) into the ruling class and the privileged circles of the gentry was through the above mentioned system of examinations.[12] In the examinations a man had the chance to display his mastery of the Chinese canon of literature, poetry and philosophy. The 'examination hell' from education to office-holding thus represented the traditional route to success in late imperial China, placing political and economic power, social influence, prestige, and cultural capital into the hands of the Chinese literati.[13] Students, aspiring scholars, active and retired officials and the literati—regardless of whether they held office or not, by virtue of their education, were among those climbing the social ladder or already within the socio-political elite of the Empire.

Women, alongside slaves and the offspring of prostitutes, were excluded from participation in the official examination system and hence from taking office.[14] Only a handful of women were educated enough to write or produce literature in traditional China. Women only began to participate in the scholar elite's literary culture in the early modern era, from the sixteenth century onwards. In the late Ming era at the turn of the seventeenth century courtesans were

8 See Daria Berg: Publishing Industry. In: David Pong, et al. (eds): *Encyclopedia of Modern China*. Detroit, MI: Charles Scribner's Sons 2009, pp. 220–25.

9 McDermott, *Social History*, p. 11

10 McDermott, *Social History*, p. 11.

11 Victor Mair (ed.): *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press 2001, p. 162.

12 Daria Berg: *Carnival in China: A Reading of the* Xingshi yinyuan zhuan. Leiden, Boston and Köln: E.J. Brill 2002, pp. 225–28.

13 See Berg, *Carnival*, pp. 171-224.

14 Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, pp. 85–119.

among the first women to become famous as writers, poets and painters.[15] They gained prominence in the literati arts and helped shape cultural ideals. Famous courtesans formed sexual, emotional and intellectual companionships with elite men, sharing their interest in learning and helping out in the scholar's studio by composing poetry as well as by compiling, collating, editing, proofreading and annotating literary works.[16] Elite women only emerged in larger numbers as readers and writers, i.e. as producers and consumers of culture, at the end of the seventeenth century.[17]

Writing women with male-level literacy made up only a tiny percentage of the population at the end of the Ming dynasty—probably even less than the one to five per cent estimated for the late Qing or the nineteenth century.[18] The names of only around 250 women authors—including both courtesans and upper-class women—have come down to us from the late Ming years.[19] In the late Qing about thirty to forty-five per cent of men and two to three per cent of women were literate; we know the names of about 3,500 women writers from that era. Although the first women rumoured to have authored fiction lived at the end of the seventeenth century[20], we have to wait until 1877 and the publication of *Hongloumeng ying* 紅樓夢影 (Shadows of Dream of the red chamber) by Gu Taiqing 顧太清 (1799–ca. 1877) to see evidence of a woman writing and publishing a novel.[21] Reading habits changed in the nineteenth century as women began to read and write fiction as well as poetry.[22]

The rise of literate women who became the new readers and writers in early modern China during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries coincided with an economic boom and the growth of the publishing industry in the prosperous Yangzi 揚子 delta region, or Jiangnan 江南 area.[23] The economic flourishing of prosperous market towns and cities increased the market for books. One may argue that a 'mass communication society' and mass print culture had already emerged during the late Ming era when commercial woodblock publishing began to flourish.[24] Individual enterprises and commercial bookstores, rather

15 Daria Berg: Courtesan Editor: Sexual Politics in Early Modern China. *T'oung Pao* 99:1:3 (2013), pp. 173–211; Daria Berg: Amazon, Artist, and Adventurer: A Courtesan in late Imperial China. In: Ken J. Hammond, Kristin Stapleton (eds): *The Human Tradition in Modern China*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield 2008, pp. 15–32. Berg, *Women and the Literary World,* pp. 85-119 and pp. 193–210.

16 Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, p. 89.

17 E.g. the Banana Garden poetry club. See Berg, *Women and the Literary World,* pp. 222–43.

18 Berg, *Women and the Literary World,* p. 7.

19 Berg, *Women and the Literary World,* p. 7.

20 Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, p. 223; Ellen Widmer: *The Beauty and the Book: Women and Fiction in Nineteenth-Century China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2006, p. 23.

21 Berg, *Women and the Literary World,* p. 223.

22 Berg, Publishing Industry, p. 221.

23 Berg, *Women and the Literary World,* p. 13.

24 See Ōki Yasushi 大木康: Minmatsu Kōnan ni okeru shuppan bunka no kenkyū 明末江南における出版文化の研究. *Hiroshima daigaku bungakubu kiyō* 50:1 (1991), pp. 74–102; Berg, *Women and the Literary World,* pp. 240–41.

than official presses, gradually came to dominate the market. Nanjing 南京, Suzhou 蘇州 and Hangzhou 杭州 became the main centres of the newly established publishing industry. Technological advances and changes in the production mode, such as the simplification of fonts and the division of labour in woodblock cutting, facilitated the production and distribution of books, thus making publication faster and more economical.[25] The wealthy and powerful Huizhou 徽州 merchants readily supplied Jiangnan publishers with wood from Anhui 安徽 province to be used in the printing business.[26] The comment of the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), who marvelled at the 'the exceedingly large number of books in circulation here and the ridiculously low prices at which they are sold'[27], reveals that there was a flourishing book market.

Commercial publishers began to make serious money. The owner of a publishing house in Hangzhou, Wang Qi 汪淇 (ca. 1605–after 1668), found himself in a position to offer employment to the highest degree holders, while never passing any examinations himself.[28] A relative who worked in the family publishing business described himself as 'filthy rich'.[29] These merchants succeeded in the publishing industry and became more wealthy and influential than many members of the scholar elite. Their new upward social mobility entailed a shift from the traditional social hierarchy to a new order.

Early modern China also witnessed the rise of great private library collections. Chapter One in this volume examines examples of such libraries in detail. Privately owned libraries could contain up to fifty thousand volumes (*juan* 卷).[30] Scholars competed in filling dozens of crates, or dozens of rooms with their books, listing them in multi-volume catalogues, and reissuing rare works in collectanea (*congshu* 叢書).[31]

The mass market in the seventeenth century targeted as its audience the growing urban population and unprecedented numbers of examination candidates, lower degree holders, 'failed' students, upwardly mobile merchants and literate women.[32] Private and commercial publishers catered to the needs of the market, producing anything from handbooks on literati taste and leisure pursuits, textbooks for the civil service examinations, travel guides for

25 Cf. Brook, *Confusions of Pleasure*, p. xxi.

26 Cf. Ōki Yasushi, Minmatsu Kōnan ni okeru shuppan bunka no kenkyū.

27 Louis Gallagher (trans.): *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matteo Ricci, 1583–1610*. New York: Random House 1953, p. 21; Brook, *Confusions of Pleasure*, p. 169.

28 Ellen Widmer: The Huanduzhai of Hangzhou and Suzhou: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Publishing. *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 56:1 (1996), pp. 77–122, esp. p. 87. Berg, Publishing Industry, p. 221.

29 Widmer, Huanduzhai, p. 91.

30 Brook, *Confusions of Pleasure*, p. 169.

31 Cf. Brook, *Confusions of Pleasure*, pp. 167–68.

32 On publishers, see also Widmer, Huanduzhai, pp. 77–122; Ōki Yasushi 大木康: Kō botan shikai: Minmatsu Shinsho Kōnan bunjin tembyō 黄牡丹詩会：明末清初江南文人点描. *Tōhōgaku* 99 (2000), pp. 33–46.

merchants, historical works and fictional narratives to erotic literature and colour printing.[33] Moral, educational and narrative works about and for merchants and women—the new readers—became popular. In the eighteenth century Beijing emerged as the new capital of commercial publishing, while publishing enterprises spread to provincial sites.[34]

Printing in movable type was used for the first time in 1638 when *Jing bao* 京報 (Peking gazette) was published in response to increasing popular demand for information about the imperial court.[35] China's 'Gutenberg revolution' happened in the late nineteenth century with the introduction of Western mechanized movable lead-type printing and photogravure printing plates to reproduce texts faster and on a larger scale for a new mass readership. The first modern and largest publishing houses were the Commercial Press (Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館, established in 1897) and the China Publishing House (Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, established in 1912). In 1872 the first mass-market newspaper entitled *Shenbao* 申報 (Shanghai news) was published.

'Print capitalism' emerged in the Republican era (1912–1949) when Shanghai became the new publishing centre. The press remained under Nationalist control until 1937.[36] Publishers began to use new modern-style publishing methods such as lithographic (*shiyin* 石印) or lead-type (*qianyin* 鉛印) printing and new commercial business forms while building on traditional channels and distribution patterns established by commercial woodblock printers. Traditional woodblock printing techniques remained in use until the 1940s.

'Print communism' denotes the new Communist-controlled press that originated with the founding of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921 and the establishment of the People's Publishing House (Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社) the same year. Mao organized a print workers union in the early 1920s. CCP publishers operated underground until the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War in 1937. As the war destroyed Shanghai's print capitalism, the CCP moved its print centre first to Yan'an 延安 and then to Beijing. Mao took control

33 Cf. William S. Atwell: From Education to Politics: The Fu She. In: William Theodore de Bary (ed.): *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press 1975, pp. 333–67; Brook, *Confusions of Pleasure*, pp. 167–72; Giovanni Vitiello: Exemplary Sodomites: Chivalry and Love in Late Ming Culture. *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 2:2 (2000), pp. 207–57; Giovanni Vitiello: The Forgotten Tears of the Lord of Longyang: Late Ming Stories of Male Prostitution and Connoisseurship. In: Peter Engelfriet, Jan de Meyer (eds): *Linked Faiths: Essays on Chinese Religions and Traditional Culture in Honour of Kristofer Schipper*. Leiden: E. J. Brill (2000), pp. 227–47; Sophie Volpp: Classifying Lust: The Seventeenth-Century Vogue for Male Love. *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 61:1 (2001), pp. 77–117.

34 Cf. Cynthia Brokaw: Commercial Woodblock Publishing in the Qing: The Dissemination of Book Culture and Its Social Impact. In: Cynthia Brokaw, Christoper Reed (eds): *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition*. Leiden: E.J. Brill 2009, pp. 39–58.

35 Brook, *Confusions of Pleasure*, p. 171–72.

36 On print capitalism, see Christopher A. Reed: *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876–1937*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press 2004.

of the publishing industry upon the foundation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on 1 October 1949.

The establishment of the PRC marked the ascension of CCP publishers to become holders of the state monopoly over the national print media. The sole purpose of the new publishing industry was to serve the people.[37] The Communist government kept control of all authorised print media and the production of the creative arts in Mao's China (1949–1976). By 1959 Mao Zedong had nationalized the publishing industry and concentrated all publishing enterprises in Beijing. Publishing during the Mao era remained CCP-dominated, heavily subsidized and non-commercial.

In that era, the distribution of books, printing supplies as well as publishing targets followed political objectives. Permitted for publication between 1949 and 1966 were works by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao; textbooks (57 million in 1950); popular literature for workers, peasants, and the masses; children's books; science and technology; and 'books for cadres only' (*neibu* 内部). Reprints of classics and traditional literature appeared for a short time during the Hundred Flowers movement (1956–1957), but the Anti-Rightist campaign of 1957 soon put an end to this. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) political tracts were among the few officially published books apart from Mao's works, of which millions of copies were produced. Chapter Five by Henningsen discusses the unofficial circulation of manuscripts in the illegal book culture during those turbulent times.

Deng Xiaoping's market reforms since 1979, the consumer revolution and the digital revolution have contributed to a rapid transformation of China's print and book cultures in the post-Mao period. Reform-era print culture witnessed the radical decentralization of the publishing industry, technological innovation especially in digital publishing, and a burst of artistic and literary creativity. The privatisation and commercialisation of the publishing industry have terminated the state monopoly on print culture. The Internet has moreover broken the blockade imposed on state media while the government pays a heavy political prize for censorship.[38] Yet publishing today still needs to negotiate the area of tension between state censorship and market demands. The nine chapters in Parts Four and Five of the present volume explore such issues in detail. The digital media have opened new avenues for publishing, presenting a new public sphere in postsocialist China while also changing the dynamics of the book market and publishing industry.

37 Cf. Christopher A. Reed: Oppositionists to Establishmentarians: Print Communism from Renmin to Xinhua. In: Cynthia Brokaw, Christoper Reed (eds): *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition*. Leiden: E.J. Brill 2009, pp. 275–311.

38 On the Internet and censorship, see Yongnian Zheng: *Technological Empowerment*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2008.

Outline

The twelve scholarly papers included in this volume explore the transformation of the publishing industry in China from the different perspectives of history, literature, media studies and sociology, discussing issues such as books and the marketplace; the rise of commercial publishing; the emergence of new authors; books in the era of the new media and new forms of communication; Internet literature, ebooks and e-publishing; blogs, microblogs and online writings; banned books, censorship and the regulation of 'harmful writings'; bestsellers and consumer culture; cybersphere and celebrity culture; originality, authenticity and plagiarism; book culture and gender; women authors, female audiences and female empowerment through editorship; and the role of literary editors and publishers in China.

This volume also presents two exclusive interviews, one with a bestselling writer, the other with a literary editor. Both are women, and they provide fascinating insights into China's latest trends in book culture and the publishing industry from a female point of view. The first interviewee, a legend on the literary scene, is the pioneering Internet writer Li Jie 勵婕 (b. 1974), better known by her pen name Anni Baobei 安妮寶貝 (Annie Baby). Although she is known for her aloofness and inaccessibility, refusing both interviews and requests to sit on literary prize committees, Li Jie gave Daria Berg a rare opportunity for an interview. The second interviewee, Shanghai scholar and literary editor Sheng Yun 盛韻, represents the new phenomenon of women active in the publishing industry behind the scenes. A contributor to the *Shanghai shuping* 上海書評 (Shanghai review of books), Sheng Yun offers fresh and rare insights into marketing strategies and current fashions in China's new book culture. Both interviewees belong to the new group of women cultural entrepreneurs in China, testifying to new forms of social and economic female empowerment.

This book is divided into five main parts: Part One, 'Books, Bestsellers and Bibliophiles in Early Modern China, 1600–1700', presents two chapters which analyse the social and literary practices of book collectors, bibliophiles and novelists in the late Ming era.

Chapter One, 'Books for Sustenance and Life. Bibliophile Practices and Skills in the Late Ming and Qi Chenghan's Library Dansheng tang' by Cathleen Paethe and Dagmar Schäfer examines the book collecting activities of the bibliophile Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁 (1563–1628) of Shaoxing 紹興. From humble beginnings, Qi's collection in the Dansheng tang 澹生堂 (Hall of the simple life) grew until it became the most extensive collection of books of the Ming Dynasty. Delving into how Qi built up his collection, the authors' focus is on the procurement channels: Qi's network of personal contacts and mutually beneficial arrangements with other collectors as well as offerings from the commercial book market. The theoretical considerations behind Qi's book collecting are illuminated as well as his motives for collecting.

Chapter Two, 'The Chinese Novel Comes of Age, *circa* 1620' by Robert E. Hegel investigates how in the less than a century between 1522 and 1620, the novel appeared in China and reached a level of maturity that was to be maintained into the twentieth century. That period saw the development of standard themes, conventional narrators and language styles,

regular structures, stable genres, and common modes of characterization. It also saw the introduction of illustrations and commentaries; this separate critical perspective developed simultaneously with the novel and promoted a growing awareness of it as a literary form. Overt artistic self-consciousness became widely visible in fiction produced after about 1620, a time which marked the maturation of the form.

Part Two, 'Print Culture at the Threshold of Modernity in Late Imperial and Republican China, 1860–1949' includes two chapters that deal with religious texts, one Buddhist and the other Christian, and the new publishing industry at the end of the imperial era in the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century respectively. These chapters discuss the role of religious publishing and the status of women.

In Chapter Three, 'Absolutely Not a Business: Chinese Buddhist Scriptural Presses and Distributors, 1860s–1930s', Gregory Adam Scott argues that several of the Buddhist xylographic scriptural presses that emerged in late nineteenth and early twentieth century China adopted many practices from commercial publishing enterprises, while strongly maintaining the position that their religious publishing endeavours were fundamentally different from that of business-oriented publishers. Through an examination of the budgetary procedures and financial reports of a few presses, Scott aims to demonstrate that even these types of religious presses, which on the face of it were highly conservative, adopted specific technologies of the modern era to expand the size and reach of their printing enterprise. This should not be understood, however, as a 'modernization' of publishing, since their core mission remained the spread of the Buddhist Dharma and the production of merit, well-established roles that had been fulfilled by temple scriptoria in the past.

In Chapter Four, '*Women in All Lands* and the Hierarchies of "Global" Knowledge in Chinese Print Culture at the Turn of the Twentieth Century' Yun Zhu examines Young John Allen (1836–1907) and Yin Pao-Lu's 任保羅 (also known as Ren Baoluo or Ren Ting-xu 任廷旭) 21-volume work entitled *Quandi wudazhou nüsu tongkao* 全地五大洲女俗通考 (Women in all lands, or China's place among the nations: a philosophic study of comparative civilizations, ancient and modern), a Chinese-language text published between 1903 and 1905 which introduces knowledge about the world's different nations with an emphasis on the status of women. Yun Zhu's discussion focuses on three important aspects of the collection: first, the nuances of translatorship, (trans)national subjectivity, and cultural agency in the collaboration among its American missionary editor, his Chinese assistant, and other indigenous advocates; second, women's issues as a multi-layered subject matter in the collection's proposal for a religious and socio-cultural enlightenment and their central relevance to a modern Chinese readership; and thirdly, the hierarchies of its 'global' vision and the new sense of temporal spatiality it introduces. The collection's uneven mediation between the national and the global by way of women's issues, Yun Zhu argues, reveals a series of entwined changes in the Chinese book and print culture as it underwent transformation at the turn of the twentieth century.

Part Three, 'Book Culture in Mao's China, 1949–1976' contains one chapter which investigates how unofficial literature circulated in manuscript form during the Cultural Revolution and assesses its literary impact on reform era literature.

Chapter Five by Lena Henningsen, 'Crime, Love, and Science: Continuity and Change in Hand-Copied Entertainment Fiction (*shouchaoben* 手抄本) from the Cultural Revolution' analyses illegal book culture during the Cultural Revolution and its impact on later developments. Henningsen focuses on hand-copied entertainment fiction (*shouchaoben*), discussing two texts that at the time circulated particularly widely and in multiple versions: the *San duo meihua* 三朵梅花 (Three plum blossoms) series and *Di er ci woshou* 第二次握手 (The second handshake). *Shouchaoben* fiction clearly had an impact on later literary developments, on account of the themes broached, the focus on entertainment and the processes of its creation, circulation and consumption, which reached beyond the realm of Party control. Building as they did on earlier literary genres of espionage, crime and love, these stories resounded well with readers. On the surface, the texts provided readers with much sought-after entertainment and distraction. On a deeper level, the stories also resounded with readers' Cultural Revolution experiences, in addressing such topics as the idealism necessary to devote oneself to the nation, the status of intellectuals or the legitimacy of striving for romantic love. Given that the texts circulated in hand-written copies, multiple versions of the 'same' story exist. The analysis of different versions of the same story points at 'stability across variation' and at the fact that literary practices were deeply intertwined with political, social and living conditions: the texts thus gave individuals a forum to become creative authors (or secondary authors) testing literary ambitions and new thoughts. The texts and the practices of their creation, circulation, re-creation, preservation and consumption thus continued earlier literary practices and foreshadowed trends in later literary genres as well as in the Chinese bestseller market that would evolve in the 1980s and 1990s.

Part Four, 'Bestsellers and a New Generation of Writers in Postsocialist China, 1979–2016' brings together four chapters that examine the formation of bestsellers, reading communities and the new generation of writers and readers.

Chapter Six presents Daria Berg and Rui Kunze's interview with Sheng Yun, an assistant research professor at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences and a contributing editor at the *Shanghai Review of Books*. A doctoral graduate from Fudan University, Sheng Yun is also a translator and a member of the standing committee of Shanghai International Literary Week for the Shanghai Book Fair. She is a remarkable example of a twenty-first century Chinese woman scholar using the power of literary editorship to make her voice heard. Female editorship is a new phenomenon in reform era China, but it has its roots in the early modern era. As a literary editor Sheng Yun is following in the footsteps of illustrious pioneering women writers-cum-editors such as gentlewomen Shen Yixiu 沈宜修 (1590–1635) and Wang Duanshu 王端淑 (1621–ca. 1701) and celebrated courtesans and *femmes de lettres* Xue Susu

薛素素 (before 1575–after 1637) and Wang Wei 王微 (ca. 1600–1647).[39] These seventeenth-century poets-cum-editors were among the first women in Chinese history to discover that the processes of editing and publishing male- and female-authored literature empowered them in new ways, allowing them to fashion the female self in new ways by editing 'her-story' and (re)writing history—a pursuit traditionally dominated by men.

Chapter Seven, 'The Formation of Reading Communities: An Analysis of Bestsellers in Postsocialist China' by Lai-man Winnie Yee examines how China's publishing industry has undergone remarkable changes since the 1980s, when literature and politics in the PRC were united in their dismissal of market-driven literary production. The flourishing of the publishing industry as well as Internet literature in the past two decades further confirms this continued commercialization.[40] In order to understand these tendencies and their influences in terms of literary production and consumption, this chapter analyzes how bestsellers construct particular reading communities in China, and the way reading as a social activity is linked to sociological and historical questions. The discussion centres on bestselling Chinese-language literary works in China between 2008 and 2012.

Yee pays critical attention both to the annual Top Ten Bestsellers book charts and to the monthly Top Ten Bestsellers lists of non-fiction works and the latter's strong connections to the cultural governance of the state. Her study focuses on the complex relationship between bestsellers, cultural consciousness and the formation of a reading community of Chinese classics in the new millennium. China's print culture both conditions and facilitates social cohesion and the formation of a collective consciousness, which had been undermined by 30 years of the reform and open-door policy (*gaige kaifang* 改革開放) advocated by Deng Xiaoping. The discussion deals with both the function and significance of print culture in postsocialist China, and the relationship between cultural control and market economy under the rule of China's Communist Party.

Yee's chapter first traces publication trends in postsocialist China, then goes on to examine China's bestseller business vis-à-vis the Chinese government's cultural policy. It shows how *guoxue* 國學 (education in Chinese history and traditions) exemplifies the emerging roles of intellectuals and new cross-media collaborations. During the period covered by this study, a proliferation of *guoxue* publications and introductions to classics gradually gave way to studies and edited collections on the state and Party leaders. It seems as though, once a reading community has been forged by the publishing of classics, there is a ready audience for works of Party policy. The discussion reaches the tentative conclusion that the rise and fall of bestsellers will continue to reflect government policy, and that print media will continue to be an instrument of ideological shaping or indoctrination.

39 On women editors in early modern China, see Berg, *Women and the Literary World,* pp. 169–210; Berg, Courtesan Editor, pp. 173–211.

40 Kong, Shuyu: *Consuming Literature: Best Sellers and the Commercialization of Literary Production in Contemporary China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press 2005, p. 4.

In Chapter Eight, 'From New Concept to Youth Economy: The Rise and Crisis of the Me Generation', Hui Faye Xiao studies the rise of a generation of young writers growing up during China's reform era, in particular Guo Jingming 郭敬明 (b. 1983) and Han Han 韓寒 (b. 1982). These two young writers have topped the bestseller lists, superseding many senior Chinese writers including the Nobel Laureates Gao Xingjian 高行健 (b. 1940) and Mo Yan 莫言 (b. 1955). They also run commercially successful literary journals and multimedia companies, representing the rise of a new generation of entrepreneur-writers. Born in the 1980s, Guo Jingming and Han Han belong to the 'Me Generation'. In the American context, the Me Generation refers to the generation of Baby Boomers (born between 1943 and 1960). In the Chinese context, the term has been used to refer to the post-1980 generation (*ba ling hou* 80 後), or the approximately 200 million Chinese citizens born between 1980 and 1989. The 1980s marked the starting point of two critical transitions in Chinese history: a paradigmatic shift from high socialism to high capitalism, and the implementation of the 'One Child' policy. As a result, the increasing concentration of family financial and affective investment provides this generation with better educational opportunities and exposes them to a new global consumer culture. However, the unprecedented social mobility and massive dislocation caused by China's rapid economic and social transformations have also created a profound sense of loss and confusion over identity among this generation. Xiao investigates the ways in which these two writers represent China's Me Generation in their creative writings and how their literary works and entrepreneurial practices reinforce, contest or negotiate mainstream ideology, particularly the most recent state-sanctioned discourse of the China Dream, which aims to conjure up a glamorous image of a rising China. Xiao's study raises a series of important questions: What political, economic and cultural conditions contribute to the huge market success of these Me Generation entrepreneur-writers? How does the rise of the Me Generation change the landscape of China's publishing industry and book culture? How are their bestselling novels received among the Me Generation readers? What role do new media, particularly the Internet, play in the reception, appreciation, and discussion of these bestsellers, which shape the Me Generation readers' understanding and articulation of constantly redefined youth identities and gender norms in an age of overwhelming changes and social fragmentation?

In Chapter Nine, 'Sex and the Glocalising City: Women Writers as Transcultural Travellers in Postsocialist Chinese Literature, 1997–2016', Daria Berg and Rui Kunze investigate the themes of gender, sexuality and the glocalising cityscape—combining both globalising and localising trends—in postsocialist Chinese women's writings. Using the works of two women writers—Wei Hui 衛慧 (*alias* Zhou Weihui 周衛慧, b. 1973) and Chun Shu春樹 (*alias* Zou Nan 鄒楠, b. 1983)—as case studies, this chapter traces transcultural flows from US popular culture into China and the construction of a new glocalising culture in Chinese literary discourse. It examines the new wave of women's writings about the glocalising cityscape, transcultural travel and the quest for cosmopolitanism. The imaginary of the glocalising cityscape appears in two dimensions: as a local, native place as epitomised by Shanghai and

Beijing, and also as a global, foreign symbol of ultramodernity in the shape of New York. It sets the stage for China's new transcultural women travellers who seek an ultramodern lifestyle characterized by sexual and economic emancipation. This study sheds fresh light on the self-fashioning of a new generation of women writers as China's emerging cultural entrepreneurs.

Part Five, 'Internet Literature and the ebook Industry in Twenty-First Century China' discusses how the rise of the new digital media has changed book culture in China.

Chapter Ten, 'People Must Search within China's Contradictions to Discover What Really Matters', reports Daria Berg's interview with bestselling woman author and pioneering Internet writer Li Jie, better known by her pen name Anni Baobei. Li Jie is a novelist and essayist from Ningbo 寧波, Zhejiang 浙江 province. In 1997–98 she began publishing short works of fiction on the pioneering Chinese literary website Rongshu xia 榕樹下 (Under the Banyan Tree). Li Jie later joined the staff of the website and from 2000 the website hosted a regular column in which her writings appeared 'for kindred spirits to read'. In 2000 she also published her first volume in print, *Gaobie Wei'an* 告別薇安 (Goodbye, Vivian), a collection of short stories that included some of the works she had previously published online. The book went on to sell an estimated half a million copies and turned her into a household name among young Chinese readers. After publishing several successful novels under the name of Anni Baobei, among them *Lianhua* 蓮花 (Lotus, 2006), the author announced via Weibo in 2014 that she would adopt the Buddhist-inspired pen name Qingshan 慶山. Her latest book is a non-fiction travelogue that contains interviews. It is also discussed in Chapter Nine by Daria Berg and Rui Kunze. The interview with Li Jie provides rare insights into the career and thought of this famous woman writer while also shedding light on the beginnings of Internet literature in China and its impact on the cultural scene from a bestselling author's point of view.

Chapter Eleven, 'Postsocialist Publishing: Internet Literature in the PRC' by Michel Hockx addresses changes in the regulation regime for book publishing in the PRC with particular reference to the publication of literary works. Based on the assumption that the current regulation regime is 'postsocialist' (i.e. no longer run by socialist institutions but still displaying socialist mentalities), the chapter argues that the arrival of the Internet in China, and especially the spectacular rise of websites publishing full-length online popular novels, has signalled the certain gradual demise of the old print-based system which only allowed the publication of books with designated 'book numbers'. Drawing on information obtained from following the development of certain websites over a period of time, as well as readings of relevant policy documents and interviews with state regulators, Hockx shows that state regulation of Internet literature is characterized both by the encouragement of self-regulation on the one hand, and by the drawing of a clear 'bottom line' on the other. The most recognizable remnant of socialist attitudes in this process is the continued insistence that literature (especially popular fiction read by large numbers of people) should present 'healthy' content, epitomized by the state's continued refusal to impose age limits on access to pornography. This places state regulators and policy makers in the paradoxical situation that any decision they make about the definition of pornography and obscenity would potentially open up a

whole category of 'adult' material to readers of all ages (or, conversely, make it illegal for all readers, including adults). In its conclusion, the chapter assesses the extent to which the recent arrival of ebooks, blurring the boundaries between online publishing and print publishing, will lead to further transformations of Chinese book culture and its regulation.

Chapter Twelve, 'Production of Consumption, Consumption of Production – Readers Empowered, Authors Enabled and Digital Prosumption Facilitated in the Landscape of Popular Literature in China' by Chao Shih-Chen, examines the rise of virtual books and the digital publishing industry. In 1994, the notion of *hulianwang* 互聯網 (Internet) was introduced into China. Three years later, Rongshu xia, the first literary portal to host a large number of works produced by both amateurs and professional writers, was set up to offer a virtual space for literature production and consumption. The expansion of literary portal websites made it easier for literary works—the majority of which appear in the form of serialised popular fiction—to be produced and consumed. Today, Internet literary portals have become common. Many netizens produce (write and publish) their works in virtual space, while many more netizens consume 'virtual books' online using various electronic devices, thanks to the convenience of the Internet. The popularity of 'virtual books' indicates a profound change in China's book culture. While the production and consumption of a literary product, to a large extent, used to be confined mainly to elites, Internet literature has turned it into an everyday life practice for netizens. The rise of 'virtual books' also points to a significant change in the literary production, publication, and consumption model. Chao describes this model as 'prosumption'—production and consumption in one. This chapter aims to analyze the model of prosumption by adopting Michel de Certeau's notion of general consumers acting as proactive producers in his 'The Practice of Everyday Life' as a basis for comparison between a traditional paper-based production and consumption and a virtual prosumption in today's China. Through this comparison, the way in which and the extent to which production and consumption in a paper-based literary field evolve into a new model of prosumption in a virtual literary field will be elaborated. The elaboration is largely built upon examining the changing roles of authors and readers during the prosumption process. Using Qidian zhongwen wang 起點中文網 (Starting point Chinese net), arguably the most commercially successful literary portal website in China, as a case study, Chao's chapter attempts to shed light on the prosumption model implemented by the website to introduce this profound change from physical books to virtual books in China today.

Chapter Thirteen, 'Disruptive Innovations in the Chinese ebook Industry' by Xiang Ren, investigates the new digital publishing industry. Xiang Ren's study enquires whether digital publishing is leading to a paradigm shift or only replicating the print publishing systems in digital garb. This chapter explores the digital transformation of book publishing and ebook cultures in China through the lens of disruptive innovation. Disruptive innovation in this study refers to innovations developed by the Chinese ebook initiatives that create new markets and value networks for digital publishing and eventually displace the traditional publishing models. Ren examines three case studies of disruptive innovation in different ebook areas:

Qidian, the literary self-publishing site; China Mobile Reading Base 中國移動閱讀基地, the ebook distributor for mobile phone reading; and Duokan yuedu 多看閱讀, an ebook startup with user-oriented and user-driven innovation. It discusses the business innovations and industrial changes driven by digital dynamics and Internet cultures that dis- and re-intermediate publishing communication, empower authors and users in connected and distributed ways, and enable new channels and models to capitalise on content resources. This chapter also explores the cultural impacts of disruptive ebook practices, in particular digital activism and enlightenment, along with the rise of digital reading publics and ebook cultures.

Chapter Fourteen, 'Blogging and Intellectual Life in Twenty-First Century China' by Giorgio Strafella and Daria Berg, aims at appraising the place and impact of blogging and other forms of online self-publication on Chinese intellectual life. By focusing on online writers who 'post their thoughts, experiences and politics' online[41], it sheds light on how the spread of Internet usage in China since the late 1990s has changed public discourse and the role of traditional gatekeepers such as the Party-state and print publishers. It highlights similarities between blogs and 'citizen magazines', i.e. publications whose production and distribution are independent from Party-state control and which represented the main vehicle to spread information and commentary outside official channels before the popularisation of Internet usage. Drawing on a recent survey of blog writers and blog readers, as well as on our survey of China's most visited blogs, this chapter identifies key features of the Chinese blogosphere and examines issues such as responsibility, trust and style. In the second part of the chapter and in the light of the above-mentioned surveys, we analyse and compare the online writing practices of two of China's most prominent bloggers and celebrities, artist-cum-activist Ai Weiwei 艾未未 (b. 1957) and bestselling novelist Han Han. As a result, this study points at blogging as a vast source of insights into China's new 'vernacular culture'.

To sum up, this volume aims to contribute to the ongoing debate around the transformation in China's book culture and publishing industry today, while showing their links with the past and their place within the globalising culture in the age of the digital media. It is our hope that it may provide a new platform to stimulate further discussion and future scholarly adventures.

41 Kaye D. Trammell/Ana Keshelashvili: Examining the New Influencers. A Self-presentation Study of A-list Blogs. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 82:4 (2005), p. 968.

I
Books, Bestsellers and Bibliophiles in Early Modern China, 1600–1700

1
Books for Sustenance and Life: Bibliophile Practices and Skills in the Late Ming and Qi Chenghan's Library Dansheng tang

Cathleen Paethe and Dagmar Schäfer

When the ancients were hungry they [books] were sustenance,
when they were cold [they were] clothing,
when they were lonely [they were] good friends.
how can I surpass them?
昔人饑以當食, 寒以當衣, 寂廖以當好友. 余豈能過之.[1]

Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁 (1563–1628) described himself as 'crazy about texts' (*duyu chi* 蠹魚癡), a 'glutton for books' (*duyu zhi shi* 蠹魚之嗜).[2] As shown by his remark above, for him, texts were more than just objects. They fed and clothed him, comforted him in his loneliness and were his good friends. No wonder then, that Qi amassed one of the most extensive—or even the most extensive—private text collections of the Ming era (1368–1644) in the region of Jiangnan. Zhao Yu 趙昱 (1689–1747), his great-grandson, a book collector himself, noting one hundred years later that it contained a total of 100,000 fascicles.[3] In terms of numbers, Qi Chenghan's collection dwarfed even the most famous library of the Ming period, the *Tianyi ge* 天一閣 (Tianyi pavilion) in Ningbo 寧波 county, Zhejiang, which comprised only 70,000 fascicles.[4] A count, based on Qi Chenghan's *Dansheng tang cangshu pu* 澹生堂

1 Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁: Cangshu xunyue 藏書訓約. In: Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁 (ed.): *Dansheng tang quanji* 澹生堂全集 [n.p.]: [n/a] [n.d.], juan 14 卷 14, Dushu zhi 讀書志, p. 3a. Here Qi Chenghan modifies a quotation by You Mao 尤袤 (1127–1194), a well-known man of letters, book collector and bibliographer of the Southern Song period (1127–1279) from Wuxi 無錫, Jiangsu province.

2 Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁: Shu ma suiji zhong 數馬歲記中. In: Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang quanji*, juan 12 卷 12, Ji 記, p. 69a and Qi Chenghan, Cangshu xunyue, p. 2a.

3 Zhao Yu 趙昱: Chuncao yuan xiaoji 春草園小記. In: Ding Bing 丁丙 (ed.): *Wulin zhanggu congbian* 武林掌故叢編. [Qiantang Ding shi Zhengbei tang louban 錢塘丁氏正備堂鏤版 ed.]. Qiantang: Ding shi Jiahui tang 1883, vol. 57, p. 6b (entry: *Kuangting* 曠亭).

4 Wang Yanfei 王燕飛: Qi shi Dansheng tang cangshu xiaoshi: Dansheng tang chongjian si bai nian ji 祁氏澹生堂藏書小識: 澹生堂重建四百年祭. *Shaoxing wenli xueyuan xuebao* 22:3 (2002), p. 14.

藏書譜 (Catalogue of books stored in the Hall of Humble Life), shows an actual inventory of 9,378 works.[5]

Historians of Chinese book culture have exemplified both Qi Chenghan's efforts and his collection for its size. This study suggests, however, that the actual value of Qi Chenghan's legacy for the study of texts as material artefacts is yet to be unveiled. Qi Chenghan's collection is one of the few that represents the work of an individual (rather than of a family or a generation). While some bibliophiles basked in the reflected glory of their treasures, often keeping the doors to their repertories firmly closed, Qi Chenghan has left a legacy that enables us to unlock the daily practices of collection during his era. The reading interests of this collector are at the forefront of his diaries and through them and his library catalogue we see his story and that of the collection revealed, as in no other case. Through this, the values and ideals which guided the bibliophilia of this era are also revealed.

It is these issues that this chapter addresses: the material, intellectual and social conditions of text collecting in the late Ming period. We will look at Qi Chenghan's intellectual and social interactions with his peers and the strategies and rhetoric that he employed in his quest for texts. The beginnings of Qi's collection lie in books obtained from the public market. Later he adopted techniques to procure pieces mainly from private hands. As we discover Qi Chenghan, the person, the collector and the networker, we shed light on the public markets that existed for texts in the late Ming era and the social networking pursued for the love of books.

This study also suggests that in the case of Qi Chenghan, the term 'book lover' or 'bibliophile' is not entirely correct. Our research revealed that Qi Chenghan, generally celebrated as an exemplary of Ming bibliophiles who were vying with each other to 'obtain copies of books that were not on the market and that money could not buy'[6], mainly wanted to trace, compare, restore and re-compile original texts. For Qi Chenghan the significant unit was thus the artefact or 'text' and not the book as a collectible or objet d'art. It is in this sense that Qi informs us about the importance this era assigned to hand-written copies in comparison to printed works.

Qi Chenghan's inclination became apparent when he defined collecting as an act involving knowledge and skills and identified a collection as the mirror of a person's grasp of textual traditions. He did not pursue book collecting simply as a performative activity—'a strategy for publicizing one's scholarship and wisdom', as Dennis Twitchett and Frederick Mote

5 Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁: *Dansheng tang cangshu pu* 澹生堂藏書譜 [n.p.]: [n/a] [n.d.]. This number comprises the individual works from the collected works (*congshu* 叢書), including duplicates. The catalogue reflects the collection in the year 1618, the year in which it was probably composed. It does not reflect the holdings that constituted the final collection, as Qi worked on it up until his death. We thank Zheng Cheng for allowing us to study his transcription of the catalogue.

6 Qi Chenghan in a letter to his sons. Cited according to Huang Shang 黃裳: Qi Chenghan jiashu ba 祁承㸁家書跋. *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 32:4 (1984), p. 266.

have argued.[7] Neither was it for him an act of passion consisting, as Werner Muensterberger suggests, 'of the selecting, gathering and keeping of objects of subjective value.'[8] Instead, by emphasizing objectifiable criteria and a set of rules governing the collection and assessment of texts, Qi re-examines bibliophilia as acknowledging that content and context are inseparably intertwined.

Born into a middle-class literati family based in the prosperous heart of the Ming empire in the year 1563, it is no surprise that Qi Chenghan, the person, became a lover of books. Throughout his life, though travelling extensively, Qi would remain rooted in this local society and build on his family connections to enable his collecting pursuits. When he died in 1628 aged 66[9] he was laid to rest in Kuaiji 會稽 county, in the Hualu mountains (Hualu shan 化鹿山),[10] only a few kilometres away from his birthplace and hometown Meishu 梅墅 in Shanyin 山陰 county (Shaoxing prefecture, Zhejiang). Since the Song period (960–1279) Shaoxing had been a cultural and economic centre of the region, regularly producing scholars who would rise into high official posts. Schools and students, teachers and learned scholars populated this place, creating and using books and papers that booksellers, printing houses and scribes made available to them. Shaoxing prefecture was one of the most influential centres for bibliophiles in Zhejiang province during the Ming era, with 146 private libraries, 77 of which were situated in the counties of Shanyin and Kuaiji.[11]

Locally, the Qi family was influential. Qi Chenghan's grandfather Qi Qing 祁清 (1510–1570) a high-ranking and respected official, spurred his grandson's interest in books, bequeathing him a fine small collection. By contrast, Qi Chenghan considered his father Qi Rusen 祁汝森 (1539–1572) physically and mentally weak, dying as he did at the young age of 34, when Qi Chenghan was only 10 years old.[12] In his early adult years Qi Chenghan married the daughter of the Neo-Confucian philosopher Wang Zhongrui王鍾瑞 (n.d.).[13] They

7 Dennis Twitchett/Frederick W. Mote (eds): *The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644*, Part 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998 (= The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 8), p. 666.

8 Werner Muensterberger: *Sammeln—eine unbändige Leidenschaft. Psychologische Perspektiven*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1999, pp. 26–27.

9 See [Anon.]: *Shanyin Qi shi jiapu* 山阴祁氏家谱. [Qing chaoben 清抄本 ed.] [n.p.]: [n/a] [n.d.]. [n.p.]]

10 Ibid., [n.p.]. See also the entry in Carrington L. Goodrich, Zhaoying Fang (eds): *Dictionary of Ming Biography 1368–1644*, New York/London: Columbia University Press 1976, p. 216.

11 Zhao Renfei 赵任飞/Cai Yan 蔡彦: Ming Qing yilai Shaoxing cangshujia he cangshulou yanjiu 明清以来绍兴藏书家和藏书楼研究. *Shaoxing wenli xueyuan xuebao (Zhexue shehui kexueban)* 4 (2009), pp. 19–20.

12 Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁: Xianzu kao tong feng dafu Shaanxi buzheng siyou buzheng shi Mengquan fujun ji xianzu bi Jin taifuren xingshi 先祖考通奉大夫陕西布政司右布政使蒙泉府君暨先祖妣金太夫人行實 In: Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang quanji*, juan 15 卷 15, Zhuan 傳, p. 43a.

13 See the following for a biography: Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁: Wang weng Gaoshi zhuan 王翁高士傳. In: Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang quanji*, juan 15 卷 15, Zhuan, pp. 1a–5b. See also the letter Shang Wang Yubing waifu 上王禹屏外父. In: Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang quanji*, juan 17 卷 17, Chidu 尺牘, pp. 9b–10a.

had five sons: Linjia 麟佳 (n.d.), Fengjia 鳳佳 (n.d.), Junjia 駿佳 (1588–?), Biaojia 彪佳 (1602–1645) and Xiangjia 象佳 (n.d.).[14]

Qi Chenghan grew up in a prospering Ming state during the Wanli period (1572–1620). After 1601, when the Wanli emperor began withdrawing from politics, Qi increasingly divided his time between officialdom and collecting books. While other literati were complaining and documenting decay, Qi's writings suggest that he was not overly concerned with political affairs. He held several official positions at that time and seems to have largely followed through with his duties, but much like the emperor himself, he gradually withdrew from his official role.

Qi Chenghan's early ambitions were quite typical of his time. After a first attempt in 1601, Qi obtained the highest grade (*jinshi* 進士) in the imperial examinations of 1604, but then contented himself with lower and middle-ranking positions that enabled him to look after his book collection and garden. Though his family had produced many middle to high-level officials, they were never particularly wealthy. When Qi underlined how little they had, in particular after the early deaths of both his father and grandfather, his assessment was already influenced by his plans for his collection of books. Clearly much of what he had, from his wife's dowry to what he earned in the civil service, was invested in paper and books—the latter irrespective of it being printed or handwritten. But we must note that even then Qi was never truly poor. On the contrary, he achieved a modest degree of wealth and by the end of his career even owned lands that he leased out.

> [...] Every year we lease out our property, also the income from home-grown [fruits and] rice; there are more than 600 *mu*. I have everything listed in a folder, where you can look it up. The annual lease for [the harvest of leaves] of mulberry trees, the ponds, and the rent for the premises and the silk mill are not included therein. Added together, we gain a surplus.
>
> [...] 大家每年收租田, 連自種及收銀、收米, 約六百餘畝, 我俱有租簿可查; 而每年桑葉池租及今下處機房之租, 不在其內, 算來當有贏餘.[15]

He fostered a large network of colleagues, peers and friends. His biography, letters and diaries reveal a mindful and responsible family head and a considerate book collector, acting resourcefully with a longue durée approach.

14 Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁, Xianzu kao tong feng dafu Shanxi buzheng siyou buzheng shi Mengquan fujun ji xianzu bi Jin taitai xingshi, p. 44a. One genealogy mentions another daughter. Qi Changzheng 祁昌徵: *Shanyin Qi shi shixi biao* 山陰祁氏世系表 [n.p.]: [n/a] [1800], [n.p.]. Only Qi Biaojia 祁彪佳 (1602–1645) achieved the highest academic grade in the imperial examinations, jinshi, in 1622 and became a famous official and Ming loyalist. For Qi Biaojia and his wife Shang Jinglan 商景蘭 (1605–1680), who was one of the most famous female poets of the late Ming and early Qing period, see Daria Berg: *Women and the Literary World in Early Modern China*. London: Routledge 2013, pp. 65, 231.

15 Qi Chenghan in an undated letter to his sons. Transcript according to Huang Shang, Qi Chenghan jiashu ba, p. 278.

Qi Chenghan: The Book Collector

Qi Chenghan, the book collector, was a one-off. His life as a collector can be roughly divided into three different phases: (1) an early period during which Qi learned the ropes, following family traits; (2) a fresh start and the establishment of his own collection from 1601 onwards; (3) a period of acceleration ten years into collecting during which Qi Chenghan honed his strategy, expanded his collectors' network considerably and employed all necessary means to secure access to rare texts by either purchasing or copying manuscripts and printed works. Within these 27 years, from 1601 to 1628, Qi Chenghan not only put together one of the largest private book collections in the late Ming empire but also one that built on an accomplished vision of collecting for life. These efforts included the development of generalizable and reliable strategies for accessing texts.

Qi Chenghan's family had a love for books going back generations. Qi notes that 'in more than 20 years as an official, my grandfather had collected five to seven shelves full of books'.[16] After his father's early death, as the eldest son Qi inherited the collection. Aged 25, he expanded it over the next ten years to an inventory of around 10,000 fascicles. During this early phase, all the financial means at Qi Chenghan's disposal was spent on books, including his wife's dowry and what he earned as a private tutor. At this time his interest in books, it seems, was at its most passionate, fuelled by a youthful impatience rather than strategic considerations as to how to build a collection and what it should contain.

Bad luck, however, brought an end to Qi Chenghan's efforts in 1597, when a servant's unfortunate accident set the collection and the building on fire. Saddened, Qi bemoaned the fact that 'from the collection of my ancestors and the collection amassed by myself over half of my life, not a single page remained.'[17] Unfortunately, many libraries of the time met the same fate. Dejected by the loss of the collection, Qi took it particularly hard. Both his mental state and his finances suffered significantly.

It took Qi four years to regain his footing. His second attempt at a collection is marked by a slow start which, on the occasion of a trip to Beijing, he blamed on his lack of financial means. Qi also lamented the local conditions in some of the places he was posted to: certain postings offered little in terms of books. From a historian's point of view, the fire seems to represent a shift in attitude, but whether this was forced by finances or was a deliberate decision on his part is unclear. From this point on, Qi demonstrates himself to be more systematic, persistent and patient.

Qi Chenghan was now pursuing a greater vision, taking a longer-term view. In 1601 he purchased an abandoned garden in Meishu which he would later name the Secret Garden,

16 'Tongfeng gong zai shi ershi yu nian you yishu wuqi jia 通奉公在仕二十餘年有遺書五七架.' Qi Chenghan, Cangshu xunyue, p. 1a.

17 'Xianshi suo yi ji ban sheng suo gou wu pian chu cunzhe 先世所遺及半生所購無片楮存者.' Qi Chenghan, Cangshu xunyue, p. 2a.

Mi yuan 密園, remodelling the landscape to house a collection that was still to be built. Qi's vision integrated spaces to house his personal and collector identities. His description of the garden details purpose-specific library buildings with facilities for the production and use of texts carefully arranged in relation to his private living quarters. The most significant of the library buildings, the Hall of Humble Life (*Dansheng tang* 澹生堂) which stored core texts, became synonymous with the collection.[18]

Though the garden has not yet been studied in detail, Qi's own description, as well as a superficial site-investigation, suggest that the garden would have required a considerable investment at a point in time when Qi was still running low on funds. We can hence speculate that even if he had wanted to, he would not have had the financial means available to boost his collection by making a large initial purchase from the remainders of other collections in the way that collectors like Fan Qin 范欽 (1506–1585) of Ningbo had done to build up the Tianyi ge 天一閣. His collection was based on the book collections of Wanjuan lou 萬卷樓[19] belonging to Feng Fang 豐坊 (1493–1566) and the Jingsi zhai 靜思齋 collection of Yuan Zhongche 袁忠徹 (1376–1458).[20] Despite the slow pace in this first phase Qi still managed to purchase more than 9,300 texts from commercial bookshops, book dealers and members of his personal circles. Money was not the only factor determining how his collection grew.

Book Markets and Privateers

Later in life Qi Chenghan condemned the commercial print and book market as deficient and mostly uninteresting, though his notes indicate that this was where he became versed in textual traditions as well as learning the ropes of book collecting: 'Every time I entered the [book] markets I leaned against the book crates and read.'[21]

From Qi Chenghan's point of view, it was not only finances but also his official assignments which interfered with his collecting interests, dictating the pace of his efforts. He cursed, for instance, his assignment to the post of a petty clerk (*li* 吏[22]) and the resulting move to the small town of Ningyang 寧陽, in Anhui province. In such small and remote places the supply

18 The garden and buildings are described in detail by Qi Chenghan in the following two works: Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁: Mi yuan qianji 密園前記 and Mi yuan houji 密園後記. In: Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang quanji*, juan 11 卷 11, Ji 記, pp. 6b–17b and pp. 17b–34a. For the purchase of the garden, see especially Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁, Mi yuan qianji, p. 6b. For reasons of length the garden design cannot be discussed here.

19 Bruce Rusk: The Rogue Classicist: Feng Fang (1493–1566) and his Forgeries (PhD diss.). Los Angeles, University of California 2004, p. 103. Ulrich Stackmann: Die Geschichte der chinesischen Bibliothek Tian yi ge vom 16. Jahrhundert bis in die Gegenwart. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 1990, pp. 54–55.

20 Ren Jiyu 任继愈 (ed.): *Zhongguo cangshulou* 中國藏書. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe 2001, p. 1012.

21 'Mei xiang shimen yi du kan shu 每向市門倚櫝看書.' Qi Chenghan, Cangshu xunyue, p. 2b.

22 *Li* 吏: Minor official in a state agency, responsible for minor duties of all kinds, without rank. See Charles O. Hucker: *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 1985, p. 302, No. 8536.

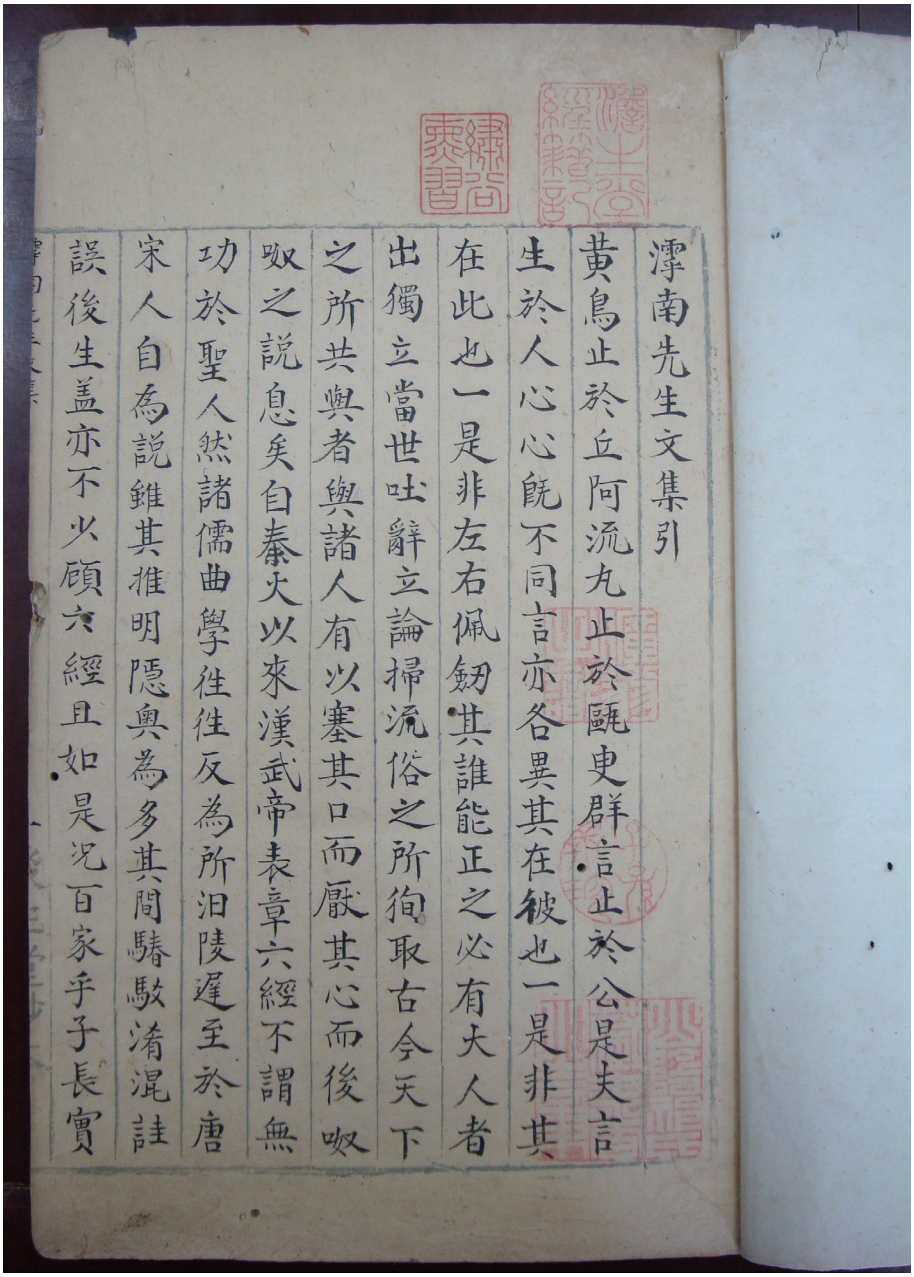


Figure 1: Handwritten copy (*chaoben* 抄本) by Qi Chenghan of the book Wang Ruoxu 王若虛: *Hunan yilao Wang xiansheng wenji* 滹南遺老王先生文集, p. 1a, with four collector's seals used by Qi Chenghan.

of books was limited or non-existent, as he observed: 'This place has no regional history, how alas, could there be books here?'[23] More research is needed to reveal exactly which texts were available there, but it seems clear that it would mostly have been the standard works with which Qi started off: the Ming canon for the civil service examinations and general education and official histories which constituted the cornerstones in most scholarly households of the time. His efforts might also be interpreted as an attempt at restoring his ancestor's collection, but only in the general sense of building a stock of reference works.

Qi took every chance he could for a stroll to a bookshop, but he also quickly realized that an official's post left little opportunity for such outings. He was so busy that he did not always find time to visit bookshops. This must have been especially bitter in his next official posting to Maoyuan 茂苑 (Suzhou 蘇州) which, in contrast to Ningyang, was a flourishing centre for printing and collecting.[24] Seeing books without being able to touch and purchase them was Qi Chenghan's idea of a nightmare:

> Much more abundant [than in Ningyang] was the situation in Maoyuan [Suzhou], where I later transferred [as an official]. Here there were as many writings and books as in Yanshi [Beijing], but my official duties were so many that I found no time to breathe. It was not as if I was afraid to make mistakes in dealing with the local customs and practices, I was in fact so busy that I had no leisure time at all.
>
> 及更繁茂苑, 其爲經籍淵藪, 雖猶之燕市乎. 然而吏事鞅掌, 呼吸不遑,初非畏風流之罪過, 實迫于晷刻口無暇耳.[25]

However, with his appointment to Nanjing 南京, an even bigger book centre of the Ming period,[26] where he took an official position in October 1610, Qi was able to break free from work commitments. Subsequently his inventory surged, resulting in the expansion of his library.[27]

23 'Xuan yi shihe wei ling chu li Ningyang zhang da yi cheng, ji yi cheng qie que an you yu shu 旋以釋褐爲令初吏寧陽掌大一城, 即邑乘且闕安有餘書.' Qi Chenghan, Cangshu xunyue, p. 2b.

24 For the book collections of this period, see Chen Guanzhi 陳冠至: *Mingdai de Suzhou cangshu: Cangshujia de cangshu huodong yu cangshu shenghuo* 明代的蘇州藏書: 藏書家的藏書活動與藏書生活. Taipei: Huamulan wenhua chubanshe 2007, pp. 29–43. For the printing centre, see Miao Yonghe 缪咏禾: *Zhongguo chuban tongshi*: Mingdai juan 中国出版通史: 明代卷. Beijing: Zhongguo shuji chubanshe 2008, p. 168.

25 Qi Chenghan, Cangshu xunyue, p. 2b.

26 Chia investigates Nanjing as a print centre. See Lucille Chia: Of Three Mountains Street. The Commercial Publishers of Ming Nanjing. In: Cynthia J. Brokaw, Kai-wing Chow (eds): *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*. Berkeley: University of California Press 2005, pp. 107–51.

27 In three of Qi's diaries dating from this time he regularly writes about the expansion of his book collection. Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁: Shu ma suiji shang 數馬歲記上, Shu ma suiji zhong 數馬歲記中 and Shu ma suiji xia 數馬歲記下. In: Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang quanji*, juan 12 卷 12, Ji 記, pp. 60a–64b, 64b–72b and 72b–76b.

Nanjing must have looked like a paradise to Qi Chenghan. According to historian Zhang Xiumin, it boasted at least 94 bookshops of various specialties, some of considerable size.[28] Nanjing was also home to the Southern Imperial Academy of Nanjing (Nanjing guozi jian 南京國子監) further boosting the number of printed works available.[29] Qi's professional situation had also changed. In contrast to his previous posts, his position in Nanjing bored him, leaving him more time to hunt for texts, and although he found his work unfulfilling, it did provide him with opportunities to travel, hence expanding the geographical range of his search. His roaming through Nanjing was thus supplemented by occasional forays to places nearby.

Qi Chenghan ended his appointment in Nanjing in December 1613 with an extended stay at his home in Shanyin, where he occupied himself intensively with what he had already acquired.[30] By the end of his short retreat he had also updated his inventory of books and found that in the twelve years since restarting his collection the number of fascicles in his hands had almost tripled.[31]

In 1614, Qi Chenghan held no official position, and so was able to spend a great deal of time in Nanjing, where he procured a number of works. In 1615 he accepted a position in Ji'an 吉安, in Jiangxi, which according to historian Miao Yonghe must have offered little hope for a book lover. Only 20 private libraries existed in Jiangxi during the Ming era[32] and the province had no reputation among the book and printing centers of the time. Miao identifies over 800 works originally printed in the entire province, the great majority in Nanchang and a smaller number in the city of Ji'an.[33] Curiously, the number of authors from (or living in) Jiangxi province is much higher: Miao Yonghe, for instance, counts 4,331 works[34] of Jiangxi authors that were in circulation during this period – mostly in handwritten editions.

In 1617 Qi successfully managed a drought in the region, distributing what water there remained to the poor. The elite, feeling they had been unfairly treated, denounced him,

28 For a list of bookshops see Zhang Xiumin 張秀民/Han Qi 韩琦: *Zhongguo yinshua shi* 中國印刷史. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe 2006, pp. 243–46.

29 Zhang Xiumin/Han Qi, *Zhongguo yinshua shi*, pp. 242–43.

30 Qi Chenghan, Shu ma suiji zhong, p. 61b.

31 'Gengchou ou yi xing yi zhi bian, jing sui yuan ju, [...] yi shi jiu xu, si zai bei er san yi 癸丑偶以行役之便, 經歲園居, [...] 以視舊蓄, 似再倍而三矣.' Qi Chenghan, Cangshu xunyue, p. 3a.

32 This puts Jiangxi far behind in Fu Xuancong's statistics, a distant fourth after Jiangsu province with 142, Zhejiang with 114 and Fujian with 22 libraries. See Fu Xuancong 傅璇琮/Xie Zhuohua 谢灼华 (eds): *Zhongguo cangshu tongshi* 中国藏书通史. Ningbo: Ningbo chubanshe 2001, p. 560. The bibliophile Lu Shen 陸深 (1477–1544), who travelled around Jiangxi in order to inspect the book collections there, established that there were only one or two libraries. Hu Yinglin 胡應麟: Jingji huitong 经籍会通. In: Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (ed.): *Shaoshi shan fang bicong* 少室山房筆叢. Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe 2001, p. 13.

33 Miao Yonghe 繆詠禾: *Mingdai chuban shi gao* 明代出版史稿. Nanjing: Jiangsu chubanshe 2000, p. 107. The commercial book trade played hardly any role at all. Miao notes only seven bookshops, which printed a total of only 14 works. Most of the works were printed by government institutions (428 works) and private individuals (446 works).

34 *Ibid*., p. 107.

resulting in his dismissal. Qi left Ji'an and spent the following years in Shanyin, dedicating himself to his book collection. In the following years he accepted posts in Suzhou 宿州 prefecture (in today's Anhui province) as a magistrate which seems to have kept him from his passion until he was transferred back to Nanjing in 1621. In Henan, where Qi served as an official after 1625[35], he bought or copied books:

> I sent books [home] in a total of eight crates. Two crates contain regional histories of the entire province of Henan; they are not particularly valuable. All of the others are valuable books. In one crate are extraordinary books printed by [your] uncle.[36]
>
> 發回書共八夾, 內有河南全省志書二夾不甚貴重, 此外皆好書也. 有一夾特於陝西三十八叔印來者.[37]

From at least the time of his stay in Ji'an onwards, Qi Chenghan increasingly made contact with collectors, scholars, men of letters and officials (those able to procure him official works) which he continued to cultivate after his departure. Through them he found out about books and editions, which he hoped to procure or at least inspect. He achieved this contact through visits and regular correspondence, which enabled him to organize inspections of collections, and borrow books, but also to produce copies, order books and receive gifts. One such collector was Jiao Hong 焦竑 (1540–1620) in Nanjing. More often than not, Qi approached collectors who are historically almost unheard of otherwise.

Qi Chenghan: The Networker

Qi was based in Meishu but as we have seen, his official positions took him to many provinces, and also to the capital, Beijing. In later years, as he sophisticated his collection, he increasingly shifted his attention to peer collectors, developing various strategies to obtain texts. Gift-giving or exchange agreements with peers were used to secure access to desired texts. Whenever a book or manuscript owner was not willing to share, Qi 'requested' possibilities of inspecting the original text. Or he asked the owner to lend the text to him for copying. All these attempts indicate that Qi was not an antiquarian collecting the 'artifact' book but rather he 'collected' to be able to restore the original (or complete) text.

35 For this year see Yan Yifan 嚴倚帆: *Qi Chenghan ji Dansheng tang cangshu yanjiu* 祁承㸁及澹生堂藏書研究. Taipei/ New York: Han Mei tushu youxian gongsi 1991, p. 362.

36 This was Qi Chenghan's only brother, Qi Chengxun 祁承勳 (1572–1651). He held an official post in Shaanxi.

37 Transcript according to Huang Shang, Qi Chenghan jiashu ba, p. 266. Huang dates this letter to the year 1623, though we have been unable to discern how he arrives at this dating. Cf. Yan Yifan, Qi *Chenghan ji Dansheng tang cangshu yanjiu*, p. 339. According to him, Qi did not arrive in Henan until 1625.

By the 1610s the commercial market could no longer satisfy his ever more sophisticated demands, and Qi was compelled to increasingly expand his network. For this he often relied on personal acquaintances he had made during his official career and even more so on people he knew from his native area. It is also evident that he did not have contact with those collectors considered to be the most reputable, important or prominent from a historical perspective.

Between 1617 and 1621 Qi was relatively free from the demands of officialdom and had time to dedicate himself intensively to cultivating and expanding his inventory. This was also when he compiled the catalogue of his collection, *Dansheng tang cangshu pu* 澹生堂藏書譜, which he completed in 1618.[38]

He produced a list of book titles he was looking for and we may speculate that he carried it with him whenever he was searching for new gems:

> When I went to Baimen [Nanjing], I set out to search for other book lovers, asked scholars what they had collected in order to exchange [books] with them which I had duplicates of or were missing. Gradually a sequence emerged.
>
> 自入白門力尋蠹好, 詢於博雅, 覓之收藏, 兼以所重易其所闕, 稍有次第.[39]

A meticulous bibliophile, Qi frequently noted in his diaries where, when and how texts were obtained, and indicated his motives, day-to-day requirements, and the life-long personal contacts he had fostered. However, often the information is incomplete and he does not always mention his contacts by name, writing only of 'friends' he visited to inspect books, or who sent him books, as in this entry in 1618:

> Went into town to visit Zhou Dianwei[40] and visited friends and looked at books they had.
>
> 入城報謁周奠維并過友人家觀書.[41]

Neither does Qi Chenghan provide direct evidence of having been in contact with Chen Di 陳第 (1541–1617), a high-ranking military official who occupied himself with linguistics and had an inventory of at least 10,000 fascicles.[42] However, he did own five works authored

38 This catalogue can now be found in the Rare Book Room of the Nanjing Library and originated from the collection of bibliophile Ding Bing (1832–1899) from Hangzhou 杭州. According to his records it was an autograph from Qi Chenghan. See Ding Bing 丁丙. *Shanben shushi cangshu zhi* 善本書室藏書志. [Qiantang Ding shi ke 錢塘丁氏刻 ed.] Hangzhou: 1901, juan 14 卷 14, pp. 5b–6b.

39 Qi Chenghan, Cangshu xunyue, pp. 2b–3a.

40 Zhou Dianwei is Zhou Mengyin 周夢尹 (*jinshi* 1613), who lived in the district of Shangyu 上虞 in Shaoxing prefecture.

41 Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁: Wuwu li 戊午曆. In: Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang quanji*, juan 13 卷 13, Ji 記, p. 36a.

42 Fu Xuancong /Xie Zhuohua, *Zhongguo cangshu tongshi*, pp. 630-33.

by Chen Di which he likely received through his colleague and friend Jiao Hong 焦竑 whose collection, as he emphasizes, he was allowed to see in situ:

> The book collection of Jiao Ruohou [Jiao Hong] from Jinling [Nanjing] [consists of] two buildings, five rooms are full of books. I saw them with my own eyes and looked through and investigated each [book] individually, that is not easy. [...]
>
> 金陵之焦太史弱侯[侯],藏書兩樓,五楹俱滿.余所目覩,而一一皆經校,譬探討,尤人所難.[43]

This claim seems exceptional, because most owners did not open their private libraries even to close friends. Also Qi does not seem to have had regular and close contact with Jiao, borrowing books from him on only one other occasion.[44]

In his catalogue Qi also lists one of the catalogues of Jiao's collection, the *Jiao shi cangshumu* 焦氏藏書目.[45] Unlike Qi, Jiao Hong used his library as a magnet to attract his peers, hosting a number of famous bibliophiles, for instance, Zhao Qimei 趙琦美 (1563–1624)[46] and the collectors Feng Mengzhen 馮夢禎 (1546–1605)[47] and Mei Dingzuo 梅鼎祚 (1549–1615).[48] Quite clearly, Qi Chenghan used Jiao Hong as a networking hub. In 1609 Jiao Hong made an agreement with all three aforementioned scholars in Nanjing to exchange rare books and editions every three years.[49] Other guests of Jiao Hong, like the bibliophiles Wu Bangyao 吳邦耀 and Wang Weijian 王惟儉 (*jinshi* 1595) from Kaifeng 開封 in Henan cannot be linked to Qi Chenghan.[50] Whether it was Qi who was selective about his contacts, or his colleagues, remains unclear.

43 Qi Chenghan, Cangshu xunyue, p. 6a.

44 '[...] cong Jiao taishi yu youren Yu Shiyi ge jiede shi yu zhong [...] 從焦太史與友人余世奕各借得十餘種.' Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁: Xia ji ji 夏輯紀. In: Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang quanji*, juan 14 卷 14, Dushu zhi 讀書志, p. 87.

45 Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang cangshu pu*, [n.p.].

46 Zhao put together the most important collection in Changshu 常熟 (today's Suzhou 蘇州) in Maiwang guan 脈望館. See Fan Fengshu 范凤书: *Zhongguo sijia cangshushi* 中国私家藏书史. Zhengzhou: Daxiang chubanshe 2009, pp. 219-21.

47 He became chancellor of the Imperial Academy in Nanjing (*Nanjing Guozi jijiu* 南京國子祭酒). After retiring he settled in Hangzhou and put together his book collection, including a number of rarities, storing it in the Kuaixue tang 快雪堂,. He also worked as a printer and printed a number of works at the Mianmiao ge 綿眇閣, including the quite popular work *Nanjing Guozi jian keyin de shu* 南京國子監刻印的書. See Chen Xinrong 陈心蓉: *Jiaxing cangshushi* 嘉兴藏书史. Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe 2010, p. 40.

48 Mei Dingzuo was a bibliophile from Xuancheng 宣城 in Anhui province. See Ren Jiyu, *Zhongguo cangshulou*, pp. 1076–78.

49 Li Yu'an 李玉安/Chen Chuanyi 陈传艺 (ed.): *Zhongguo cangshujia cidian* 中国藏书家辞典. Wuhan: Hubei jiayu chubanshe 1989, p. 142 (entry on Mei Dingzuo 梅鼎祚).

50 Li Jianxiong 李剑雄: *Jiao Hong pingzhuan* 焦竑评传. Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe 1999, p. 365. On Wang Weijian, see Wang Tianxing 王天兴/Wang Yaxing 王亚兴/Wang Zongyu 王宗虞 (eds): *Henan*

Numerous examples underline the fact that Qi made a point of staying in contact with local collectors after leaving his posts. He had, for instance, 36 works from Guo Zizhang 郭子章 (1542–1618), a high-ranking official, bibliophile and author from Ji'an, and also—like Qi— a voracious reader. Guo and Qi corresponded with each other addressing bibliophile topics.[51] Unfortunately we know very little about his collection, the catalogue of which, *Guo Zizhang Binyisheng shumu* 郭子章蠙衣生書目, is thought to be lost.[52]

During his time as an official in Maoyuan 茂苑 (Suzhou) from 1606–1609, Qi Chenghan contacted the collectors Shen Yongmao 申用懋 (1560–1638),[53] Chen Renxi 陳仁錫 (1581–1636) and Xu Zichang 許自昌 (1578–1623). Their relationship lasted a life-time and they regularly exchanged books. There, too, Qi established contacts with bibliophiles, including Li Zongyan 李宗延 (1555–1627) and Zhu Qinmei 朱勤美 (n.d.).

It seems that in most cases Qi Chenghan was interested in facilitating exchanges of books, and specifying facilities and methods rather than cementing personal ties for friendship. In a letter to his sons he remarks that he had copied a number of works in Henan.[54] He felt no need to specify the source in his catalogue, but there is no doubt that here he is referring to Zhu Qinmei, for whom he wrote a foreword and to whom he sent a letter congratulating him on his publication.[55]

Whether the level of detail on sources and origins for certain items in the catalogue was left deliberately vague is difficult to say at this point. Qi's regular references to personal contacts and ties in the diary by contrast indicate the importance of social relations in the Ming bibliophilia world. Numerous contacts can be verified by the presence of titles in the library catalogue, elucidating actual exchanges. Other entries detail a broad network of contacts used as much for intellectual exchange as for the acquisition of texts. A number of those with whom Qi Chenghan cultivated direct contact can be clearly identified but astonishingly, as previously

lidai mingren cidian 河南历代名人辞典, Zhongzhou guji chubanshe 1991, p. 426 and Li Yu'an/Chen Chuanyi, *Zhongguo cangshujia cidian*, p. 45.

51 For example in the letter Yu Guo Qingluo [Guo Zizhang] 與郭青螺. In: Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang quanji*, juan 17 卷 17, Chidu 尺牘, pp. 59a–61b.

52 Cf. Shen Chang 申畅/Chen Fangping 陈方平/Wang Hongchuan 王宏川 (eds): *Zhongguo mulu xuejia cidian* 中国目录学家辞典, Zhengzhou: He'nan renmin chubanshe 1988, p. 100. This catalogue was included in Qi's collection (see Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang cangshu pu*), [n.p.]).

53 Yongmao, son of Shen Shixing 申時行 (1535–1614) who held the office of First Grand Secretary, the highest office in the Ming dynasty. Zhang Huizhi 张撝之/Chen Qiwei 沉起煒/Liu Dezhong 劉德重 (eds): *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 中国历代人名大辞典. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 1999, p. 411.

54 '*Ci pan yai Zhongzhou* [*He'nan*] *suo lu shu* [...] 此番在中州[河南]所录书 [...].' Cited according to Huang Shang, Qi Chenghan jiashu ba, p. 265.

55 For the forewords Zhuju wangsun Yanshi yuan ji xu 竹居王孫鷃適園記序 and He Zhuju zongzheng qi zhi xu 賀竹居宗正七衮序, see Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang quanji*, juan 7 卷 7, Xu 序, pp. 49a–51b; and juan 8 卷 8, Xu 序, pp. 35a–38a, respectively. This may be confusing, but it is correct: *Xu* 序: juan 7 contains Prefaces and juan 8 Letters of Congratulations.

noted, he had no direct contact with the owners of the largest or best-known collections of his day. Qi's social status or a competitive attitude may have played a major role here.

A letter in which Qi asks Zhu Qinmei for permission to copy from his library reveals the social etiquette and pleasantries that surrounded each such exchange. The letter also underlines the fact that the exchange of texts was only possible by gaining personal trust. Qi was extremely well informed about the inventory of Zhu's library and may have even copied from it. Here he suggests a joint compilation of records from three different prefectures in Hebei, combining it with items from Zhu's collection. Rather than travelling himself, Qi suggests dispatching a scholar he had befriended, a proposal which implies that he was on good terms with Zhu.

> I spoke previously about the scholar Ruan Taichong of Zhongzhou (Henan); he is truly educated. Humbly I would like to produce a combined compilation of the records from three prefectures of Hebei. It will bear the title *Heshuo waishi*[56] and differ in style from the old regional histories. I would like to importune the scholar and known author [Ruan Taichong] and edit [this text] with him. But [my books] are too few; I do not have any references and biographical texts I could use as a basis. As I am missing the funds for writing utensils and accommodation, I asked the gentleman [Ruan Taichong] to stay with you, pick out the books and consult the collection of your ancestors [Zhu Mujie]. Once [the texts] are selected, compiled, and the results are available, then he [Ruan Taichong] will take it to Fuyang [Cizhou 磁州[57]]. With your great collection [literally: ten *li* lotus fragrance] a new historical work will be compiled, that is a gratifying thing. I hope you, honored sir, will discuss this with the gentleman [Ruan Taichong] and then inform me [about the result].
>
> 向所語及中州高士阮太冲, 定博雅君子也. 不佞欲合河北三郡為一志, 名為《河朔外史》而體裁不同于郡乘. 意欲煩此君大手筆共為編摩, 但此中僻陋, 無典故記傳可攷. 不佞少具筆札廩餼之費, 邀此君即借寓于尊府, 可以抽萬卷而攷遺書. 俟採緝已有成績, 然後延之滏陽, 借十里之荷香, 成一代之新史. 似亦快事望翁臺一商於此君, 見示為望.[58]

Even if Zhu Qinmei agreed, it seems that the project did not come to fruition, as no such compilation exists or was ever mentioned again and this title is not documented in the catalogue. Qi Chenghan, however, boasted about his access to Zhu Qinmei's collection in a letter to a bibliophile friend in Shaoxing, Tao Shiling 陶奭齡 (1571–1640): 'I received

56 This was the *hao* of Nai Xian 迺贤 (1309–1369?). Nai mainly penned poems, of which Qi Chenghan had two anthologies (in part from *congshu*) in his collection. We are fairly sure, however, that Qi is not speaking of Nai Xian here, but is in fact using the term *Heshuo waishi* 河朔外史 to refer to the area north of the Yellow River, or *Huang he* 黃河. The context suggests that Qi wanted to compile a kind of regional history, but we could find no indications that this was ever accomplished, and there are no further references to it.

57 Today Cizhou belongs to the city of Handan 邯鄲 in Hebei province. Qi Chenghan worked as an official in Cizhou starting in 1625.

58 Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁: Yu Zhuji zongzheng 與竹居宗正. In: Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang quanji*, juan 18 卷 18, Chidu 尺牘, p. 53b. Yuan Taizhong is Yuan Hanwen 阮漢聞, who came from Weishi 尉氏, a district near Kaifeng.

manuscripts of several tens of works [of the *Yijing*] from Zhuju [Zhu Qinmei] [...] and now have 200 of them altogether [...].'[59]

In this case, too, Qi Chenghan explained his interest in Tao Shiling's collectible, again proposing a plan for an edition, this time of the *Yijing*. He also suggested a title—*Yi pu* 易譜:

> [...] Now I would like to discuss something with my friend [Tao Gongwang]. Our two families have been collecting *Yijing* texts for generations; how could we not continue this tradition? I just received several tens of manuscripts [from the inventory] of Zhuju [Zhu Qinmei], member of the imperial family, along with my inventory that is a total of more than 200 works, all of them texts on the *Yijing* written by earlier scholars. Most of the bibliophiles in Zhejiang who possess writings by older scholars on the *Yijing* are located in North Zhejiang (苕).[60] I hope to find these writings and copy them, one by one. We could then issue them, along with the works on this subject [*Yijing*] from our two collections, in a book called *Yi pu*. That would be a very pleasant undertaking. Do you agree with my proposal or not?
>
> [...]近有一事敢與兄約, 吾兩家世受易豈可畧于世業. 復錄得竹居王孫家抄本數十部, 合之家藏可得二百種, 皆前賢專門之學. 而吾浙藏書家惟苕上最多, 有前賢解易之書. 幸多方訪求, 一一抄錄. 兩家各出所有以合之,緝為《易譜》一書, 亦大快事. 尊見其許之否.[61]

Again no such title is listed, either in the catalogue of Qi Chenghan's collection or elsewhere. Access to another bibliophile's collection required a scholarly justification beyond an interest in the book as artefact. These proposals to create compilations could, however, also be seen as (often successful) strategies to obtain access to collections by flattering bibliophiles who may have been more concerned with status and legacy than Qi Chenghan, and therefore more inclined to give him access if they would benefit from it.

Interesting patterns can be discerned in Qi Chenghan's networking activities. While he refused to acknowledge prominent collectors with big libraries, he noted exchanges with relatively unknown collectors. In his home prefecture Shaoxing, for instance, he was in contact with several lesser-known collectors, but never acknowledged large collections such as those of Han Guangye 韓廣業 (sixteenth or seventeenth century)[62] or Niu Shixi 鈕石溪 (*jinshi* 1541).[63]

Importantly, Qi's most reliable contacts were those rooted in his youth. Two of his longest-lasting friendships were with Wang Yinglin 王應遴 (?–1644)[64] and Zhang Rulin 張汝霖

59 Qi Chenghan祁承㸁: Yu Tao Gongwang 與陶公望. In: Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang quanji*, juan 18 卷 18, Chidu 尺牘, pp. 55b–56a.

60 Tiao 苕 is the abbreviated form of Tiaoxi 苕溪, a name for the northernmost part of Zhejiang province.

61 Qi Chenghan, Yu Tao Gongwang, pp. 55b–56a.

62 Li Yu'an/Chen Chuanyi, *Zhongguo cangshujia cidian*, p. 431.

63 Fan Fengshu, *Zhongguo sijia cangshushi*, pp. 203-4; Fu Xuancong/Xie Zhuohua, *Zhongguo cangshu tongshi*, pp. 629–30.

64 For brief biographical information, see Wang Xuanbiao 王宣标: Ming Wang Yinglin yuankeben 'Yan Zhuang xindiao' zaju kao 明王應遴原刻本'衍庄新调'雜剧考. *Wenhua Yichan* 4 (2012), p. 33.

(1558–1625), both of whom had also originated in Shanyin 山陰 county.[65] All were passionate book collectors and garden lovers. Zhang Rulin and Qi spent a great deal of time with each other and became close friends.

Zhang Rulin's book collection at Jie yuan 砭園 is not listed in any of the standard works about bibliophiles either.[66] Similarly Qi Chenghan reported that:

> My friend Wang Jinfu [Wang Yinglin] and myself live on the edge of the Jinghu Lake [in Meishu]. We can see each other's houses. From small we have got on well, but we are particularly bound by our love of books. As soon as one of us obtains a rare book we proudly show it to the other who then tries to find a way to buy the book himself.
>
> 吾友王堇父與余分鏡湖, 而居居相望也. 又卯角相善而更同蠹魚之嗜. 各得一奇書兩人互相誇示,必欲購得而後已.[67]

Zhang Rulin's father, Zhang Yuanbian 張元忭 (1538–1588) had amassed the Bu'er zhai 不二齋 collection. His grandson Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597–ca. 1686)[68], one of the best-known men of letters in the Ming dynasty, describes the collection as a family project: 'Over three generations books had accumulated in our family, until their number amounted to over thirty thousand fascicles.'[69]

Qi Chenghan's catalogue and writings are a treasure trove of information on contemporary collections long lost. One example is his reference to Pan Zenghong 潘曾紘 (ca. 1562–1642) and his book collection (Fangsun guan 芳蓀館), which was located in Wuxing 吳興 in Zhejiang province.[70] Huang Zongxi notes that Pan Zenghong had an extensive collection of unofficial historical works (*yeshi* 野史) on the Song period which he wanted to use to

65 Zhang Huizhi/Chen Qiwei/Liu Dezhong, *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian*, p. 1275.

66 E.g., Ren Jiyu, *Zhongguo cangshulou*; Fu Xuancong/Xie Zhuohua, *Zhongguo cangshu tongshi*; Li Yu'an/Chen Chuanyi, *Zhongguo cangshujia cidian*; Wu Han 吳晗: *Jiang Zhe cangshujia shilüe* 江浙藏書家史略. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 1981; Ye Changchi 葉昌熾: *Cangshu jishi shi* 藏書紀事詩. Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe 1958; Liang Zhan 梁戰/Guo Quanyi 郭群一 (eds): *Lidai cangshujia cidian* 歷代藏書家辭典. Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin chubanshe 1991; Fan Fengshu, *Zhongguo sijia cangshushi*; Gu Zhixing 顧志兴: *Zhejiang cangshujia cangshulou* 浙江藏书家藏书楼. Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe 1987; Gu Zhixing 顧志兴: *Zhejiang cangshushi* 浙江藏书史. Hangzhou: Hangzhou chubanshe 2006.

67 Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁: Ti Wang Jinfu youji 題王堇父遊紀. In: Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang quanji*, juan 9 卷 9, Ti 題, p. 27a.

68 Zhang Dai maintained a book collection at Kuai yuan 快園 and had an inventory of over 30,000 fascicles. See Li Yu'an/Chen Chuanyi, *Zhongguo cangshujia cidian*, p. 157.

69 Zhang Dai 張岱: *Taoan mengyi* 陶庵夢憶. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 1982, p. 18 (entry: *Sandai cangshu* 三代藏書).

70 See the entry in Yang Tingfu 杨廷福/Yang Tongfu 杨同甫: *Mingren shiming biecheng zi hao suoyin* 明人室名别称字号索引. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 2002, p. 213. For Pan see Zheng Yuanqing 郑元庆/Fan Kai 范锴/Ding Shen 丁申: Wuxing cangshu lu 吴兴藏书录. In: Xu Yan 徐雁/Wang Yanjun 王雁均 (eds): *Zhongguo lishi cangshu lunzhu duben* 中國歷史藏書論著讀本. Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe 1990, p. 560.

correct the official Song history, a plan which he was unable to realize.[71] Both his collection and its catalogue were lost.[72]

In a letter to Pan, Qi unveils some of his ideas about what he considered the duties of bibliophiles to be. Some of these were to record the successful candidates in the imperial examinations, the *Huishi lu* 會試錄 examinations in the capital, and the lists of successful candidates in the *Tingshi lu* 廷試錄 palace examinations of the Ming dynasty, and he requests that Pan have these printed for him.[73]

Societies and Informal Agreements

In his foreword to the *Dansheng tang quanji* 澹生堂全集 Chen Jiru mentions that Qi Chenghan was a member of the societies Hezhe she 合轍社 and Dushi she 讀史社. Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558–1639), one of the best known authors of the late Ming period[74], further elaborates the objectives that Qi was pursuing with these memberships:

> For the deep understanding of the classics Qi [Chenghan] had the Hezhe society; for the deep understanding of historical works, the Dushi society.
>
> 公初有 合轍社而通經學, 有讀史社 而通史學, 有海門青螺, 南皐諸公而通理學, 有雲棲老人天台無盡而通禪學.[75]

71 According to the scholar and bibliophile Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610–1695) the books were stored in ten book boxes. Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲: Tianyi ge cangshu ji 天一閣藏書記. In: Li Xibi 李希泌/Zhang Jiaohua 张椒華 (eds): *Zhongguo gudai cangshu yu jindai tushuguan shiliao* 中國古代藏書與近代圖書館史料. [*Qing Kangxi shiba nian* 清康熙十八年 [1679] edition] Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 1996, p. 37. Or the German translation of this in Stackmann: *Die Geschichte der chinesischen Bibliothek Tian yi ge vom 16. Jahrhundert bis in die Gegenwart*, pp. 212–13.

72 Shen Chang/Chen Fangping/Wang Hongchuan, *Zhongguo mulu xuejia cidian*, p. 105; Liang Zhan/Guo Quanyi, *Lidai cangshujia cidian*, p. 449. Pan's collection fell victim to the fighting which accompanied the dynastic shift from the Ming to the Qing dynasty, when soldiers used the books to build a bridge. Gu Zhixing 顾志兴, *Zhejiang cangshujia cangshulou*, p. 132.

73 Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁: Yu Pan Zhaodu 與潘昭度. In: Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang quanji*, juan 18 卷 18, Chidu 尺牘, p. 60a.

74 We doubt that Qi and Chen cultivated close contact. Qi mentions Chen only in connection with the texts he read that were authored by Chen. According to Chow, Chen was willing to write any number of forewords, as long as they were well remunerated. Perhaps this was the case here as well. (Kai-wing Chow: *Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modern China*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2004, p. 103, fn. 55, 56.) Chen Jiru came from Huating 華亭 (today's Songjiang 松江, in Shanghai). After failing the imperial examinations he left the examination system, thus relinquishing all chances of an official civil service post, and made a living writing texts. Jamie Greenbaum: *Chen Jiru (1558–1639): The Background to Development and Subsequent Uses of Literary Personae*. Leiden/Boston: Brill 2007, pp. 18-21.

75 Chen Jiru 陳繼儒: Dansheng tang quanji xu 澹生堂全集序. In: Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang quanji*, [juan 0 卷 0, *Xu* 序, pp. 6a–6b.]

Indeed Qi Chenghan himself founded the Hezhe society which was mainly a means of bringing together the local literati. The Dushi society was dedicated to the intensive study of historical works and included among its members a number of prominent Ming dynasty scholars. Founded in Nanjing in 1610 by Wang Zhijian 王志監 (1576–1633), its members included Zhang Rulin 張汝霖 (1558?–1625), Qi Chenghan's best friend, and Huang Ruxiang 黃汝亨 (1558–1626). Chen Jiru, cited above, in his *Gujin yiliezhuan xu* 古今義烈傳序 names additional members of the Dushi society such as Zhang Suzhi 張肅之 (Zhang Rulin), Tan Changyan 潭昌言, Luo Xuanfu 洛玄父, and Zhang Shiyi 張師繹.

Societies *she* 社, also known as *hui* 會, were privately founded societies whose members shared the same interests and convictions. In the Ming dynasty literary societies founded by scholars and literati, called *wenshe* 文社 and *shishe* 詩社, grew rapidly and pursued a wide variety of goals. Book historian Chen Baoliang suggests that the chief aim of these men of letters and scholars was to pursue shared studies, but the fostering of such formal structures and joint events certainly also contributed to the building of group consciousness. They needed 'colleagues' with whom they could clarify questions about texts and conduct discussions and this need for actual exchange also explains why such societies rarely extended beyond a single local town or district.[76]

Though Chen Jiru names only two of the groups, Qi was also a member of other societies and founded smaller groups for bibliophiles to exchange information about new books, and swap and loan works between members. At various other junctures Qi speaks of societies or members of societies without naming them specifically.

Agreements

Qi Chenghan also made informal collection agreements with other collectors, such as his friend Zhang Rulin in 1613:

> With Suzhi [Zhang Rulin] and two or three like-minded spirits we have agreed on a fixed date for collecting books. Every month we must obtain several rare and old books. Anyone who does not honour the agreement will be punished.
>
> 遂與肅之及二三同調為搜書之會, 期每月務得奇書及古本若干. 不如約者罰約者罰.[77]

He suggests in a letter to Xu Jiying 徐季鷹 (n.d.) that they select a number of collectors in order to acquire works that were difficult to access:

76 Chen Baoliang 陈宝良: *Zhongguo de she yu hui* 中国的社与会. Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe 2011, pp. 307, 313.

77 Qi Chenghan, Shu ma suiji zhong, p. 66b.

> [...] For 20 years I have searched every day for rare works and worn papers. If I live by the sea, what I see and hear will be limited. We should find five or six like-minded people and all of us look for texts. We must decide on an exchange method, a way of lending and transcribing texts, [the rule is]: it is forbidden to hide papers, and if they should be returned late there will be a penalty. Rare and fine texts are continuously coming together [...]
>
> [...] 訪求異書，搜緝殘編者，二十年如一日也. 然若于僻居海濱，聞見有限. 必須相結同志者五六人, 各相物色. 而又定之以互易之法, 開之以借錄之門, 嚴匿書之條, 峻稽延之罰. 奇書秘本, 不踵而集 [...][78]

Such agreements were important and efficient, and they allowed Qi Chenghan to continue to enlarge his collection whilst staying at home:

> In the year *guichou* [1613] I had the unexpected opportunity to stay at home performing official duties. Again I made an agreement with comrades-in-arms [bibliophiles] to collect together, and in so doing brought together a great number [of books].
>
> 癸丑偶以行役之便, 經歲園居, 復約同志互相裒集, 廣為搜羅.[79]

The members made reciprocal collection and trade agreements with deadlines that had to be honored: Some were valid for a week, others for months, or years. Other contacts were informal; they visited and sent books to each other, informed each other about works that might be of interest, or enquired whether a particular work was in the possession of the other collector.

Rarities Assessed: Principles for Collection

A prolific collector, Qi Chenghan adhered to the standards of his time, though his practical experience often led him to refine existing ideas or add new rules. Such was also his approach to building up an inventory. He decided to expand on one of the standard references of the Ming period for bibliographies and collecting books, the works of Zheng Qiao 鄭樵 (1104–1162),[80] adding three rules of his own to Zheng Qiao's set of eight.

78 Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁: Yu Xu Jiying 與徐季鷹. In: Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang quanji*, juan 18 卷 18, Chidu 尺牘, pp. 18–19a. It has not been possible to identify Xu Jiying 徐季鷹.

79 Qi Chenghan, Cangshu xunyue, p. 3a.

80 In Zheng's history of China *Tongzhi* 通志, completed in 1149, there are two chapters that deal with bibliophile topics: *Yiwen lüe* 藝文略 and *Jiaochou lüe* 校讎略. Qi did not have the *Tongzhi* as an entire work in his collection, but did have two editions of the treatise *lüe* 略, *Tongzhi lüe* 通志略. One edition is listed as containing 300 fascicles, another as 100 fascicles. Parts of these include the *Yiwen lüe* and *Jiaochou lüe*. The 20 *lüe* are part of the *Tongzhi* and were regarded as its most important section. Endymion Wilkinson: *Chinese History: A New Manual*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2012, p. 646.

Zheng Qiao had identified what he called the 'eight principles for acquiring books' (*qiu shu zhi dao you ba* 求書之道有八):

即類以求	Search by subject [e.g. astronomical texts in the observatories or in the collections of astronomers]
旁類以求	Acquire at schools [e.g. search for texts on Daoism in the collections of Daoists]
因地以求	Procure in the regions [e.g. search for a regional history of a place in the corresponding regions or places]
因家以求	Procure from families [e.g. search genealogies in family collections]
求之公	Procure from government institutions [e.g. search for official documents in the administrative bodies]
求之私	Procure [official documents] from private individuals
因人以求	From private individuals [specialized collectors]
因代以求	Acquire according to periods[81]

Qi Chenghan does not reject Zheng Qiao's principles of procurement, but he considered them to be no longer sufficient under the conditions faced by book collectors in the Ming period. He claimed three more had become necessary:

> Zheng Yuzhong [Zheng Qiao] names eight principles for acquiring books. [...] They are very effective for procuring books. But since there have been writings, nine of the ten writings we know about have been lost. [...] The books passed down to us from old times are as important as the sun and the stars in the sky, but one does not see much of these any longer, for how can one individual or one family collect [all writings]? Not even the government was able to preserve these writings, so how could we preserve [the non-official ones]? Even if one searches in different places and in different collections it is fruitless. Therefore, I expand the eight principles of procuring books with three more principles.
>
> 鄭漁仲論"求書之道有八". [...] 可謂典籍中之經濟矣. 然自有書契以來, 名存而實亡者十居其九. [...]夫經傳猶日星之麗天, 尚多湮沒, 况其他一人一家之私集乎. 若此之類, 即國家秘府尚不能收, 民間亦安從得之. 縱欲因地因人以求, 無益也. 余於八求之外更有三說.[82]

Qi Chenghan's additions concerned the acquisition of old writings (believed lost), which Qi considered Zheng Qiao's principles failed to address, probably because, Qi asserted, the Song dynasty book markets, unlike those in the Ming period, had still been rich in old writings. All of Qi's three principles sought ways to compensate for this loss and reconstruct old texts.

The first principle entails putting a lost text together from various sources, *jiyi fa* 輯佚法.

81 Zheng Qiao quoted according to Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁: Cangshu xunlüe 藏書訓略. In: Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang quanji*, juan 14 卷 14, Dushu zhi 讀書志, p. 7b.

82 Qi Chenghan, Cangshu xunlüe, pp. 7b–8a.

> Writings that were written during the Three Empires[83] got lost during the Han dynasty [202 BCE–8 CE], but the Han scholars often cited these writings [of the Three Empires]. Writings from the Han dynasty got lost during the Tang dynasty [618–907], but they still exist in the writings of the Tang dynasty. Writings of the Tang dynasty were lost during the Song dynasty [960–1279], but many are contained in the collections compiled by the Song scholars. Every time I consult these writings, any quotations in the text and references in the annotations that refer to earlier writings that are lost today [I] took out of these writings and made a copy of. [...] So I was able to put together incomplete writings from the Han and Tang periods. In this way not only the remainders of old writings are preserved (吉光片毛[84]) and I regard them as very valuable. [...]
>
> 書有著於三代而亡於漢者, 然漢人之引經多據之書. 有著於漢而亡於唐者, 然唐人之著述尚存之. 書有著於唐而亡於宋者, 然宋人之纂集多存之. 每至檢閱,凡正文之所引用, 註解之所證據,有涉前代之書而今失其傳者, 即另從其書,各爲錄出. [...] 又如漢唐以前殘文斷簡, 皆當收羅. 此不但吉光片毛, 自足珍重 [...].[85]

Rather than innovating, Qi Chenghan took a principle used in the Song period and gave it new importance. The idea would go on to gain even more prominence in the Qing period.[86]

Historian Yan Yifan refers to Qi's second principle as *fenxi fa* 分析法 (principle of analysis), but attaches no value to it, arguing that it served exclusively to quantitatively expand book stocks.[87]

> One should analyze a book. Like the *Tongdian* written by Mr. Du [Du You 杜佑 (735–812)] in the Tang dynasty, in which only quotations from the Tang period could be commented on; later other commentaries like those of Ouyang Yongshu [Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072)] and Lü Bojing [n.d., Song dynasty] were appended, and how could one ask Zisheng[88] [i.e. no matter how different they are]? The commentary parts in the *Shuijing* are more extensive than the *Shuijing* itself, they are unaccustomed, but magnificent. Later one knew only that Li Daoyuan [ca. 470–527] had written these commentaries, but the name of Sang Qin [ca. 3rd century B.C.], who had written the *Shuijing*, remained [long] hidden. But the meaning of whose words [in the Shishuo[89]] were originally easy to understand and hence [through the *Shishuo*] we learned something about the elegance of the people of the Jin dynasty (265–420). Liu Xiaobiao 劉孝標 [Liu Jun 劉峻 462–521] wrote a commentary for this, checked the quotations conscientiously, and with eloquent words explained the sublime meaning, and one can extract these magnificent words and

83 The Three Empires are the empires of Xia (2070–1600 BCE), Shang (ca. 1600–1046 BCE) and Zhou (1046–256 BCE).

84 *Jiguang pian mao* 吉光片毛 is a reference to the *jiguang* 吉光, a mythological Chinese animal with striped fur. It is used as a metaphor for the remnants of precious cultural possessions. More common is the variant *jiguang pianyu* 吉光片羽.

85 Qi Chenghan, Cangshu xunlüe, pp. 8a–8b.

86 Yan Yifan, *Qi Chenghan ji Dansheng tang cangshu yanjiu*, p. 185.

87 *Ibid*., pp. 185–86.

88 Zisheng 淄渑 is a combined name of the two rivers Zishui 淄水 and Shengshui 渑水 in Shandong province. As a metaphor it describes the absolute difference between two things. See Luo Zhufeng 羅竹風 (ed.): *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大詞典. Shanghai: Hanyu da cidian chubanshe 2001, p. 1437.

89 The *Shishuo* dates from the period of the Former Song dynasty (420–479 CE).

issue it as a work of its own next to the *Shishuo*, one can call it a *kuaishu*.[90] In this manner two works are passed down through the analysis. That is another principle.

一書之中,自宜分析.如杜氏《通典》著於唐,惟唐之故典可按耳,乃後人取歐陽永叔,呂伯恭輩議論附其後,不幾淄澠乎. 如《水經》一書,註乃侈於其經,奇詭宏麗,後人但知酈道元之有注,而桑欽著經之名反隱矣. 又如《世說》詞旨本自簡令,已使人識晋人丰度於眥宇間,若劉孝標之註, 援引精覈,微言妙義,更自燦然,可與《世說》各爲一種,以稱快書. 如此之類,析而爲兩使並存於宇宙之間.是亦一道也.[91]

In fact, this analytical principle is not a principle of acquisition, but a guide for the qualitative assessment of texts. It describes the task of reading texts and their various (commentated) editions conscientiously, recognizing in them valuable sections or barely perceivable commentaries in order to extract them and issue them on their own. So Qi Chenghan created new (old) texts and granted them the attention he believed they deserved. His catalogue includes a number of such texts that were generated according to this principle.

Qi's third principle suggests using paratexts, that is the forewords and editorial remarks on a work to verify important information about the origin and authorship of books and to gain information on how to obtain others.

Of the old writings there are the printing plates that were passed down in the family and collected by the local administrations; even when they are all located in the same place it is difficult to get them all. [...] I make note of the collected forewords by the gentlemen and the editorial remarks and write a list. This way I know which book I should try to get at which location. And I know which book I should look for from which person.

若夫前代遺書見有鏤板或世家所秘, 省郡所藏, 即同都共里, 尚難兼收. [...] 今以某集有序某書若干首, 某書之序刻於何年, 存於何地, 採集諸公序刻之文, 而錄爲一目. 自知某書可從某地求也. 某書可向某氏索也. 置其所已備, 覓其所未有, 則異本日集, 重復無煩. 斯眞夜行之燭, 而探寶之珠也. 是又一道.[92]

In the last two sentences Qi explains his approach to procuring books. He worked with a list of missing books and books to be acquired, thus avoiding collecting duplicates. He extracted the information for this, such as the names of the printing house, the owner of the printing plates, and the author or commentator, from the paratexts included in writings he inspected in other collections. Paratexts included forewords, epilogues, colophons, illustrations, tables of contents, and book jackets. According to Gérard Genette and Marie Maclean these are the threshold between the reader and the text, informing, convincing, advising, warning,

90 *Kuaishu* 快書 was a style of theatre presented in song and rhyme. The music for this involved striking together small copper coins or bamboo strips. See Luo Zhufeng, *Hanyu da cidian*, p. 435. Qi Chenghan may have used this here as a metaphor for a popular text.

91 Qi Chenghan, Cangshu xunlüe, pp. 8b–9a.

92 *Ibid.*, pp. 9a–10a.

and guiding the reader.[93] For Qi Chenghan paratexts had the task of a source of information about other writings. He hence interpreted them as advertising leaflets to generate interest in books that the reader had not known before.

Qi's own text on collecting books, *Cangshu xunlüe* 藏書訓略[94], has the character of a manual. In this work he records his own experiences for book collectors, and subdivides the text into different sections on purchasing books (*goushu* 購書), evaluating books (*jianshu* 鑒書), collecting books (*jushu* 聚書), and finally, reading books (*dushu* 讀書). He then relativizes the use of guidelines, suggesting that 'first and foremost, collecting books requires a broad horizon, attentiveness and concentration as well as a witty mind.'[95]

Evaluating books (*jianshu* 鑒書) should, according to Qi, be based on knowledge about the value of the texts (*shen qing zhong* 審輕重[96]). He considered qualitatively high works to be those that adhered to the standard sequence of the main groups from the four branches of the classification system (classics *jing* 經, history *shi* 史, philosophers *zi* 子 and literary collections *ji* 集). The value of a book increases with age: 'a lost text of the classics is worth as much as ten history texts.[97] His evaluation urges a collector to keep to a chronological order.[98] Certainly a collector had to be able to distinguish an original from a forgery with the aim being to be able to differentiate, within a textual tradition, between what might be an original and what might be a questionable quotation.

He assumes that texts from the philosophy *zi* 子 category were especially often forged:

> The classics are not easy to forge. Historical texts cannot be forged. It is unnecessary to forge literary collections, [thus] most of the forgeries fall under the category of [learnings] from the masters (i.e. philosophical texts) which are then however not mere/all forgeries.
>
> 經不易偽, 史不可偽,集不必偽而所偽者多在子且非獨偽也.[99]

We may also read this passage as Qi Chenghan to implying that any transcribed philosophical text – even one with mistakes – contained new meanings and that even if it only approximated the original meaning, was still philosophical. In any case Qi's hierarchy was based on the fact that the classics were known to most scholars as part of the civil service exams, meaning they should be able to recognize the contents of specific texts. Why historical texts could not be forged is not further explained. The quotation does make clear that Qi did not think highly of

93 Gérard Genette/Marie Maclean: Introduction to the Paratext. *New Literary History* 22:2 (1991), p. 261.
94 Qi Chenghan, Cangshu xunlüe, pp. 4b–33a.
95 'Yanjie yu kuan, jingshen yu zhu, er xinsi yu qiao 眼界欲寬, 精神欲注, 而心思欲巧.' Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁, Cangshu xunlüe, p. 4b.
96 *Ibid*., pp. 10a–10b.
97 'De shi shi zhe buru de yi yi jing 得史十者不如得一遺經.' *Ibid*., p. 10b.
98 *Ibid*., pp. 10a–10b.
99 *Ibid*., p. 10b.

literary collections, even though he himself often claimed to want to compile such collections and used this as an excuse to gain access to other bibliophiles' collections.

In the context of such forgeries, Qi Chenghan is as much concerned about the phenomenon of identical texts being published under different titles (*he ming shi* 覈名實[100]) as this would have been an issue for collectors wanting to avoid procuring texts twice. Or, alternatively, he presumed that collectors also faced the challenge that a title could be lost but the text might still exist (*nai you shi tong er ming yi zhe, you ming wang er shi cun zhe* 乃有實同而名異者, 有名亡而實存者[101]). Only through the careful scrutiny of each text could such a mystery be unveiled. True to the predominant doctrine of austerity in his era, Qi furthermore adopted the guiding principle of allowing collection to 'follow its natural pace' (*quan huanji* 權緩急) meaning that it should not be rushed if one wanted to succeed.[102] And last but not least, no collection could succeed without properly differentiating and classifying writings and creating corresponding catalogues (*bie pinlei* 別品類).[103]

Guidelines for Searching and Finding

Qi Chenghan's case is exceptional because he proposed theoretical guidelines and at the same time left diaries unveiling his actual practices. A comparison of selected examples shows that he developed routines informed by practical experience and then followed them systematically throughout his life.

Qi's collection stands out for its relatively high share of manuscripts, that is, handwritten copies and transcript books. In a letter to his son, Qi explains that he himself often acted as copyist and emphasized that such 'unique' hand-copied manuscripts of rare texts were an embellishment to any collection:

> I copied around 130 to 140 books myself, a total of two book crates. This amounts to a treasure I will bring home myself. If only I could continue copying like this for ten years I would have more than 2,000 binders. [...] More than half are not from bookshops; they cannot be bought for silver anywhere.
>
> 若我近所抄錄之書, 約一百三四十種, 共兩大卷箱, 此是至寶, 自家隨身攜之回也. 只如十餘年來所抄錄之書, 約以二千餘本. [...] 又況大半非坊間書, 即有銀亦無可買書.[104]

Yet Qi rarely provides information about the source of these manuscripts, i.e. their original owners, noting for instance, in 1618 that he had '[...] sorted books, borrowed and copied the

100 *Ibid*., p. 10a.
101 *Ibid*., p. 13a.
102 *Ibid*., p. 10a as well as his explanations of *quan huanji* 權緩急 on pp. 14a–15b.
103 *Ibid*., p. 10a as well as his discussions thereof on pp. 15b–19b.
104 Huang Shang 黃裳: Dansheng tang er san shi 澹生堂二三事. *Shehui kexue zhanxian* 4 (1980), p. 339; Huang Shang, Qi Chenghan jiashu ba, p. 266.

Mansou shiyi by Yuan Cishan [Yuan Jie 元結 (719–772)] in one fascicle' (整書并得借錄元次山《漫叟拾遺》一卷[105]), but he does not reveal where and from whom.

Loaning Books

Private book collectors did not become comfortable with the idea of loaning books until the late sixteenth century. Gradually, ever more collectors opened up their libraries not only to family members and their closest friends, but to other book lovers as well.[106] The old motto that loaning out books was irreverent (借書與人為不孝) then became passé in many bibliophile circles.[107] With this, new acquisition paths and information sources opened up. Qi too loaned books from his collection, but only when he possessed copies of them:

> When there are duplicates relatives and friends are allowed to borrow them and read them. If there is no duplicate it is not allowed. Originals [rather single editions/copies] may not leave the Secret Garden (*Mi yuan*).
>
> 親友借觀者,有副本則以應.無副本,則以辭.正本不得出密園外.[108]

Conversely, Qi made intensive use of the opportunity to borrow books from others with the purpose of transcribing them, as in the case of the '*Kuaiji duoying [zong] ji*[109] which I borrowed from Wang Jinfu.[110] This is the Song edition from the *neige* 內閣,[111] [...] I touch it only with washed hands to read it in a single day.'[112]

105 Qi Chenghan, Wuwu li, p. 33a.

106 Joseph P. McDermott: *A Social History of the Chinese Book: Books and Literati Culture in Late Imperial China*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press 2006, pp. 134–47 and on contrast pp. 151–55; Joseph P. McDermott: Access to Books in Late Imperial China, 960 to 1650. In: Akira Isobe 磯部彰 (ed.): *Higashi Ajia shuppan bunka kenkyū*: Niwatazumi. 東北アジア出版文化研究: にわたずみ. Tokyo: Nigensha 2004, p. 210. On practices of lending, see Xiang Shiyuan 项士元: Zhejiang lidai cangshujia kaolüe 浙江歷代藏书家考略. *Wenlan xuebao* 3:1 (1937), p. 9, where he cites sources on who loaned to whom.

107 Fan Fengshu, *Zhongguo sijia cangshushi*, p. 168.

108 Qi Chenghan, Cangshu xunyue, p. 4a.

109 A text written by Kong Yanzhi 孔延之 (1013–1074).

110 Wang Jinfu is the previously mentioned bibliophile Wang Yinglin王應遴 (?–1644), a neighbour of Qi's in Shanyin, with whom he cultivated close bibliophile contact.

111 The Grand Secretariat *neige* was the most important and influential organ of the imperial government.

112 'Cong Wang Jinfu jiede *Kuaiji duoying [zong] ji*, nai ge zhong Song ben, [...] shu shou zhan wan zhe jing ri 從王堇父借得會稽掇英[總]集, 乃閣中宋本, [...] 漱手展玩者竟日.' Qi Chenghan, Wuwu li, p. 33a.

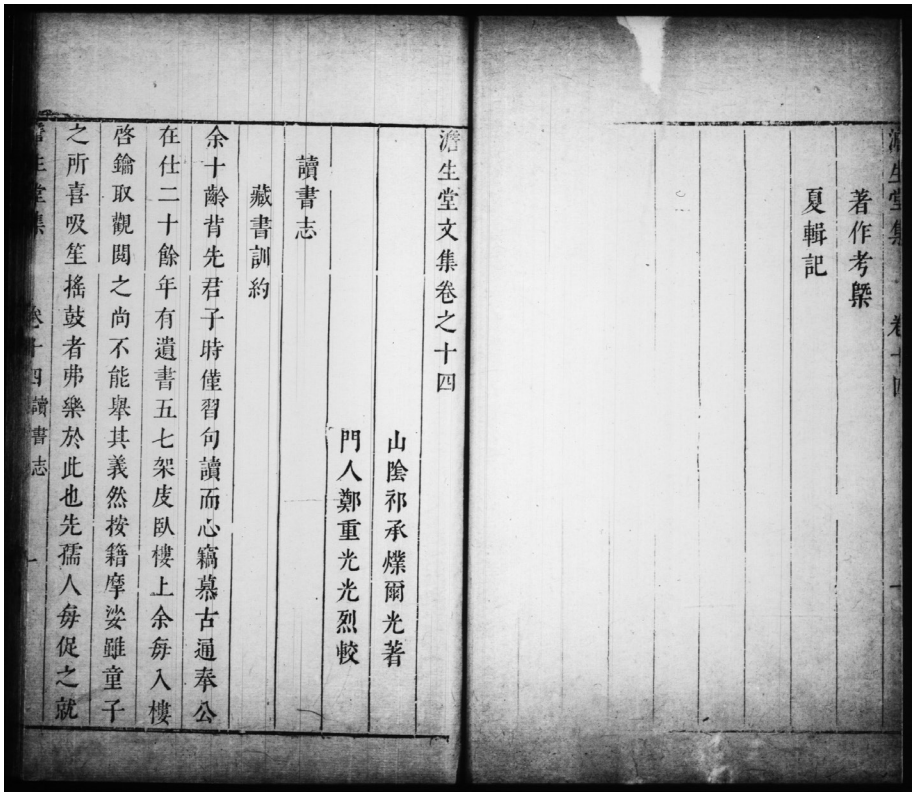


Figure 2: Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁: Cangshu xunyue 藏書訓約. In: Qi Chenghan: *Dansheng tang quanji*, juan 14 卷 14, Dushu zhi 讀書志, p. 1a. This 'Compact on the book collection ' is a kind of legacy, written for Qi 's successors.

If we believe his diary, Qi Chenghan held in his hands one of the few Song editions that were inaccessible to many collectors. Song editions, such as the *Kuaji duoying zongji* compiled by Kong Yanzhi 孔延之 (1013–1074), were rare and expensive. Bibliophiles of the Ming period venerated this work in particular because it contained singular texts also from stele inscriptions not available elsewhere, hence Qi's caution about having clean hands. Qi completed a copy on the 29th day of the 2nd month of the year 1618 with the aim of integrating it into his collection and 'looked through it once with my sons.'[113]

113 'Lu wan *Kuaiji duoying [zong] ji,* tong erzi shou jiao yi guo 錄完會稽掇英[總]集, 同兒子手校一過.' Qi Chenghan 祁承㸁: Gengshen zhengshu xiaoji 庚申整書小記. In: Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang quanji*, juan 14 卷 14, Dushu zhi 讀書志, p. 36a.

But Qi also appreciated the singularities of his own age when it came to his major topical focus: Ming history. He attempted, for instance, to get his hands on the *Wugong lu* 武功錄 in which Qu Ruifu 瞿睿夫 (also Qu Jiusi 瞿九思, 16th–17th century) records uprisings and dealings with non-Han peoples and on the borders during the reign of emperor Wanli (r. 1573–1620). This work was printed by Shi Xueqian 史學遷 in 1607 and included in Qi Jiusi's collected works, *Qu pinjun quanji* 瞿聘君全集.[114] A further print edition appeared in 1612. Qi includes this book in his catalogue, along with eight other books by Qu Ruifu. In this case he provides no information about the format but reveals that he borrowed the work from Qian Linwu 錢麟武 (Qian Xiangkun 錢象坤, 1569–1640)[115], a bibliophile from Kuaiji 會稽 in Shaoxing.

Reading another work, the *Wei Heshan wenji* 魏鶴山文集[116], Qi realized that 'more than half of the text was already missing. Contained is the *Zhou guan zhezhong* in three fascicles, that can be transcribed and stand autonomously [as a text] 文集遺缺者已過半內有周官折裏三卷可錄出另行者也[117]'.

In Nanjing he borrowed books from Jiao Hong 焦竑 and Yu Shiyi 余世奕[118] and made copies in order to integrate them into his editorial work *Huang Ming zheng xin conglu* 皇明徵信叢錄, which he was working on in 1614 ('從焦太史與友人余世奕各借得十餘種'[119]).

Some Final Thoughts

Qi Chenghan recognized that others, such as his heirs, would appreciate the monetary value that his collection represented. In a letter to his sons he said:

> Due to my career as an official I can leave you only little, aside from my book collection, which has a value of more than 2,000 *jin*, which you certainly could not have known. For each of the more than 2,000 manuscripts that I copied in the last ten years I spent about two to three *qian* for wages, board and paper, which is only 500 to 600 *jin*. Most of the collection does not originate from bookshops and there is no location where one could purchase them for any amount of money.

114 Little is known about She Xueqian (*jinshi* 1592). He came from Yicheng 翼城 in Shanxi province, where he rose from humble origins to the high rank of surveillance censor, *jiancha yushi* 監察御史. Zhang Huizhi/Chen Qiwei/Liu Dezhong (eds), *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian*, p. 430.

115 Qi Chenghan, Wuwu li, p. 57a.

116 The author Wei Heshan is Wei Liaoweng 魏了翁 (1178–1237; *hao:* Heshan 鶴山), an official, bibliophile and neo-Confucian from Pujiang 浦江 in today's Sichuan province. As a scholar he occupied himself primarily with studies on the *Zhouyi* 周易 (Changes of Zhou) and wrote a number of texts on this, a complex of topics in which Qi Chenghan was extremely interested.

117 Qi Chenghan, Cangshu xunlüe, p. 32a. Possibly Qi did this as well: in his catalogue there is an entry with the title *Zhouli zhezhong* 周禮折衷. (Qi Chenghan, *Dansheng tang cangshu pu*, [n.p.])

118 Jiao Hong and Yu Shiyi were two of Qi's life-long contacts who have already been mentioned in this chapter.

119 Qi Chenghan, Xia ji ji, p. 87a.

> 我仕途宦況, 遺汝輩者雖少, 而積書已在二千餘金之外, 汝輩不知耳. 只如十餘年來所抄錄之書, 約以二千餘本, 每本只約用工食紙張二三錢, 亦便是五六百金矣. 又況大半非坊間書, 即有銀亦無可買處.[120]

Qi himself craved neither riches nor political power. When he used his collection for social status, he did so mainly with the aim of obtaining more manuscripts and books. His passion was not driven by the ideals of scholar-official status either, as is evident from the fact that although he built one of the most comprehensive book collections in the Ming period, at the time relatively few people knew about it. His collection and collectors would not be discovered until the beginning of the Qing dynasty, and it was not until the end of the Qing era that it would become more widely known. It was only later, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, that library historians such as Quan Zuwang 全祖望 (1705–1755) and Miao Quansun 繆荃孫 (1844–1919) became interested in Qi's collecting activities and published short texts about him.[121] By that time, the collection had already been broken up. Parts had been integrated into other collections, while others were sold on the public book market. Qi Chenghan collected texts with the aim of achieving what he considered the 'complete original text': for him, the reconstruction of content was what mattered and not so much the book as artefact or antique. In terms of this approach—a passion for comprehensiveness—Qi can be considered a quintessential, yet extraordinary late Ming bibliophile.

It is in this sense that Qi exemplifies a strategic collector. In his diaries, however, he confesses that he often stumbled across unexpected treasures while simply browsing in bookshops or looking for something else. Throughout the years, he ordered, exchanged, borrowed, copied, and asked book owners to give him copies of their books. He made collection agreements with other collectors, visiting their collections, and had a number of works given to him as gifts. As he aged, Qi increasingly sought to influence procurement paths directly, loaning, trading, copying and ordering books. He was able to search purposefully for books that corresponded with his personal interests. If he was looking for a book, he spoke to friends and asked them to send him a manuscript, e.g. Pan Zenghong, from whom he requested the examination lists, or else he would send a copyist to transcribe the book for him, like Ruan Taichong, who was supposed to copy books in Zhu Qinmei's collection. Qi also visited a number of collections belonging to collectors or friends. Here he copied or borrowed books to add them to his own library. He kept track of which books he borrowed in his nearly weekly diary entries on this subject.

120 Cited according to Huang Shang 黃裳, Qi Chenghan jiashu ba, p. 266.

121 Quan Zuwang 全祖望: Kuang ting ji 曠亭記. In: Quan Zuwang 全祖望 (ed.): *Jieqi ting ji waibian* 鮚埼亭集外编. [*Qing Jiaqing shiliu nian* [*1811*] *keben* 清嘉慶十六年[1811]刻本 edition.] Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 2010, juan 20 卷 20, pp. 20a–21a (pp. 224–25); Miao Quansun 繆荃孫: Dansheng tang cangshu yue ba 澹生堂藏書約跋. In: Miao Quansun 繆荃孫 (ed.): *Ouxiang lingshi* 藕香零拾. [1913 edition] Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 1998, pp. 22b–23a (13–14).

The various exchange agreements which Qi Chenghan made with other collectors are particularly interesting. He agreed with groups of collectors in both Shaoxing and Nanjing that they would search for old books and unusual editions, meeting monthly to look through them, and to borrow or trade. Failure to uphold these agreements was punishable by a fine.

Many of these agreements did not serve as direct avenues for Qi to acquire books. Instead they functioned more as information sources and ways to exchange new works, new commentaries or unusual editions that were owned by a certain collector. This also included inspecting other collectors' catalogues. When Qi found anything interesting he was then able to take steps to bring these works into his possession.

Qi Chenghan procured the 'complete-text'. He was driven to acquire what was rare as well as being concerned with the idea of building complete collections. The latter is probably one reason why his collection eventually contained a large number of what are nowadays distinguishable as being hand-written or one-off printed manuscripts. With regard to sets of books, Qi used various methods of procurement. By making a list of the books he wanted, he initially proceeded in a structured fashion and focused on finding those books. However, at no juncture does he point out that he was searching for a work in a specific format. It appears to have been irrelevant to him whether a work was available as a printed edition or as a manuscript. All that mattered to him was restoring the original text and understanding its history and reception. Receiving the text itself and the opportunity to read and own it was an additional treat. In this sense the collector Qi Chenghan was unconcerned with distinctions about the history of the material culture of the book. He even went so far as to acquire books that were partially worm-eaten or even incomplete, hoping to find passages in them that no longer existed in other works, or that came from complete works that had been lost. It was not the object itself being collected, but the text as a unit which functioned only when the collector could guarantee a harmonious combination of context and content.

It was his love for texts that informed Qi Chenghan's attitude towards collecting: he edited, copied and assembled texts with the idea of a 'complete original text' in mind. A compendium was complete when all known works of an author or editions of a specific period or locality could be brought together. Along those lines, like many of his contemporaries, he nurtured a particular interest in authors of the Song era. His comprehensive approach to collecting encompassed how texts were produced as much as how they were used, and he planned special buildings for the storage of texts and their study. But while he did produce a guide for succeeding generations, collecting books for him was an expression of an individual's mind and achievement:

> How could I possibly ask for your generation's excellent reading to translate into rich diction! [...] 'Each of the four social classes (*simin* 四民[122]) has a clear task. The sons of the gentry (*shidafu* 士大夫) should know loyalty, uprightness, piety and friendship. They cannot be commanded to sever the continuity of

122 *Simin* 四民 is a general term for the four classes in society at the time: scholars *shi* 士, farmers *nong* 農, craftsmen *gong* 工 and merchants *shang* 商.

scholarly traditions. Extraordinary talents are well known to their contemporaries.' This is my idea of a book collector.

吾豈能必爾輩之善讀，讀而且饒於辭哉. [...] >四民皆當世業, 士大夫家子弟能知忠信孝友斯可矣. 然不可令讀書種子斷絕. 有才氣者出便名世矣.<[123] 斯余藏書之意乎.[124]

With this remark Qi Chenghan reveals himself as part of an Early Modern culture of book collecting that, while identifiable for the late Ming China, can also be found across the globe. In this sense we could compare Qi with the Ottoman poet Adbüllatif Celebi (better known as Latifi, 1491–1582), who also described the books in his library as true and loving friends who drive away all cares. Qi Chenghan was a collector who saw beyond the artefact or book as an antique, and actually read his books. He added to his collection and put texts together in order to create the writings he wanted to read.

123 Qi here quotes the popular painter, calligrapher and literatus Huang Luzhi 黃魯直 (1045–1105), also known as Huang Tingjian 黃庭監.

124 Qi Chenghan, Cangshu xunlüe, pp. 4a–4b.

2
The Chinese Novel Comes of Age, *circa* 1620

Robert E. Hegel

Background

A dramatic change, a 'turn' in cultural terms, occurs when development is perceived and responded to by a number of producers, when the potential inherent in the new form is recognized and copied, adapted, or explored further in subsequent productions. So too it was with the Chinese novel. After centuries of development of narratives in combinations of prose and verse, the first novel was published early in the sixteenth century, followed slowly by a few others until by around 1620, in the final decades of the Ming, when the novel had become a creative and widely read form of writing.[1]

By the early seventeenth century some of the most capable artisans were involved in the production of the novel. By then, printers had long been willing to commit the resources necessary to produce lengthy texts with relatively expensive illustrations and other paratextual materials, thus projecting the novel into the realm of medium-to-upper quality publications for relatively small reading audiences. Adding illustrations and commentaries provided publishers strong commercial advantages in the competitive world of the book trade; these editions with refined embellishments also marked the migration of novel production from the highly developed Fujian printing houses during the sixteenth century to the more specialized, smaller scale vanity printers of the Jiangnan cities during the seventeenth. The advantages of cheap materials (especially paper) and labor costs in Fujian lost out to the advantages of being located in cultural centers where fashions were being created.

By 1620, the Chinese novel was also established as a serious art form. Several genres had developed, as had technology and distribution patterns that made the novel widely available and broadly known. Highly educated authors were confidently taking new directions in exploring the new literary terrain offered by extended fictional prose narratives. The four *da qishu* 四大奇書 (great masterworks) of the Ming novel were in circulation. The novel structure was generally standardized, and the art of satire was employed to subvert what had become conventional themes, character types, and scenes.

Intellectually, commentators by then were seriously engaged in pointing out not only the ethical messages to be derived from individual episodes of fictional narrative but the art of composition involved in effective storytelling. In particular, the critics' attention was attracted

1 On a useful definition of the 'rise' of the novel form as a function of its commonality: Franco Moretti: *Graphs, Maps, Trees*. London and New York: Verso 2005, p. 5.

to the structuring of narrative, which they presented as parallel to the structuring of other forms of writing, in particular the examination essay and, by implication, poetry as well. By surveying selected early examples of the novel and their predecessors, in conjunction with the developing commentary tradition, this chapter seeks to document the coming of age of the novel in China in the 1620s.

The Emergence of the Novel Form

The *pinghua* 平話 or 'plain tales' are extended prose narratives considered to be the progenitors of the later novel. The earliest dates from the late Southern Song period, around 1280; all were printed in Fujian. Most are historical narratives based loosely on historiographical sources, such as *Xuanhe yishi* 宣和遺事 (Forgotten events of the Xuanhe Era, which includes the captivity of the Song Emperor Huizong at the hands of the Jurchen nomads) and *Quanxiang pinghua Sanguo zhi* 全相平話三國志 (Fully illustrated plain tales on *The Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms*). All share content with the oral traditions of storytelling and theater of the time. Most have varying amounts of verse as commentary on the events they relate, but one, *Da Tang Sanzang qujing shihua* 大唐三藏取經詩話 (Poem tale on Tripitaka of the Great Tang's quest for scriptures) was written with substantial portions in verse.[2]

The *zhugongdiao* 諸宮調 or 'medley' was a narrative form in verse. It featured one singer who performed the entire tale; the three extant texts are highly romantic. Two focus on lovers who struggle to be together, a young couple in one, Tang Emperor Minghuang and his beloved Yang Guifei in the other. The form originated in north China during the Jin and Yuan, and finally came to be supplanted by mature theater in South China early in the Ming dynasty.

Other extended forms primarily in verse developed during the Ming period and continued to grow throughout the late imperial period. Some, such as the *baojuan* 寶卷 or 'precious scrolls' are heavily didactic, narrating the lives and adventures of popular religious figures. Many of them are Buddhist.[3] Among the secular texts are a bundle of narratives known as *cihua* 詞話, or 'ballad tales,' which were discovered in a tomb. Printed in Beijing during the 1470s they contain historical and justice tales in what were to become important novel genres. Eight of the latter narrate adventures of the administrator, Bao Zheng 包拯 (999–1062), whom storytellers had made nearly divine in his judicial insights and his perspicacious judgments. The collection also includes two tales of strange phenomena with strong moral messages, a common element in fiction of all sorts.

2 For an introduction to this form, see Wilt L. Idema: Some Remarks and Speculations Concerning *p'ing-hua*. In: Wilt L. Idema: *Chinese Vernacular Fiction. The Formative Period*. Leiden: Brill 1974, pp. 69–120.

3 See Wilt L. Idema: Prosimetric and Verse Narrative. In: Kang-i Sun Chang/Stephen Owen (eds): *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press 2010, Vol. 2, pp. 343–50.

The First Novel

Structurally and in narrative complexity the *Sanguo zhi tongsu yanyi* 三國志通俗演義 (Popular elaborations on *The Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms*, 1522) was unprecedented. Its first edition, finely printed in relatively large format, has a preface dated 1494, suggesting that it might have been written before then. The work has been attributed to the obscure playwright Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中, who presumably lived during the fourteenth century, but references within the text problematize this notion. Rather than simply elaborating the *pinghua*, clearly it was more informed by the narrative structures and concerns of history. Both titles express their debt to the great *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (*Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms*), by the historian Chen Shou 陳壽 (233–297 CE). However, whereas the *pinghua* is more a collection of stories, this version of third-century events is clearly a novel, using criteria for definition derived from the later European novel traditions: a book-length work of fiction having a coherent theme and vivid characterizations—although in contrast to the supposed originality involved in later Western definitions, its debts to earlier writings (histories, religious texts, popular tales, and books of strategy) are not to be overlooked.[4] Moreover, as in other cultures then and more recently, authorship was more a matter of compiling earlier materials into new combinations than creating entirely new texts. Novels of late imperial China are often identified as rewritten and amplified versions of previous texts, as witnessed by the element *yanyi* 演義 (literally, elaborations, often translated as 'romance') in their titles; that term has been used to identify the genre of historical fiction or even the novel as a literary form.[5]

Popular Elaborations on The Chronicles on the Three Kingdoms is distinguished from the earlier *pinghua* not only by its much greater length but particularly by a clearer focus on individual personalities and the personal relationships that shape choices of action. Three sworn brothers stand out above its many other characters: Liu Bei 劉備 (161–223 CE), a distant relative of the Han imperial house who aspires to the throne when power is usurped in the capital; Zhang Fei 張飛, his tough and utterly fearless general, and Guan Yu 關羽, his unquestionably loyal commander of forces. They are assisted by the divinely perspicacious advisor Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮. Yet all are compromised characters: Liu Bei is a largely incompetent leader; Zhang Fei becomes drunk and unruly when not supervised; after death,

4 Steven Moore gives the conventional definition of the term 'novel' in his: *The Novel. An Alternative History. Beginnings to 1600*. London: Continuum 2010, p. 3; this more useful shorter description evolves out of his explorations of a very broad range of texts that share so many characteristics, pp. 3–36. Moore's emphasis is on the ongoing experimentation that characterizes the novel as a global literary form.

5 One of the most insightful and authoritative studies of this text is Andrew H. Plaks: *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel: Ssu ta ch'i shu*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1987, pp. 362–495; although Plaks reads subsequent literary history backwards to see this as the first 'literati novel,' it makes better historical sense to view it as an experimental text based on history and popular stories. See also the extensive study by Moss Roberts: Afterword. About *Three Kingdoms*, in his translation: *Three Kingdoms. A Historical Novel*. Berkeley: University of California Press 1991, pp. 937–79.

Guan Yu becomes a powerful deity, Lord Guan (關公 or 關帝), historically the patron of merchants and performers ever since.[6] Even Zhuge Liang falls through his blind loyalty to his liege. These protagonists are romanticized as were central figures in earlier narratives in verse and prose, but all are reduced to human scale. Successive generations of readers in China and throughout East and Southeast Asia have been deeply moved by their aspirations and actions, to judge from the innumerable poems in response, the theatrical versions, the sequels and adaptations in a variety of forms even into the twenty-first century.

Sixteenth-Century Growth

For the first few decades after the novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* appeared, there were no other such lengthy works of fiction. But starting around 1550, commercial printers in Fujian picked up on this idea and began to produce fairly large numbers of less artistic novels imitative of this model.[7] At first all were historical fiction, most based on Sima Guang's 司馬光 (1019–1086) great chronological history, *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (The comprehensive mirror for aid in governing) or one of its several condensations, texts that figured into the curriculum for all educated readers. In rapid succession between 1550 and around 1600 there appeared novels recounting each major period of China's past, from the mythological creation of space through to the founding of the Ming dynasty. Many, especially those printed by the Fujian book merchants, had illustrations along the top of every page, precisely as had five of the *pinghua* printed in Jianyang 300 years before. All were mildly subversive, in that they elaborate the weaknesses, as well as the strengths, of historical leaders. Perhaps more importantly, all emphasize the cyclical change of dynasties, the transience of power—and of the virtuous actions that rationalized authority from a traditional perspective. Many lacked the philosophical framework and refined language of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, however, and were soon supplanted by newer novels on these historical periods.[8]

Experimentation with theme and structure gave new shapes to the form. Several novels retold the tragic fall of the Northern Song to the Jurchen on the northern frontier early in

6 C. T. Hsia: *The Classic Chinese Novel*. New York: Columbia University Press 1968, Chapter 2; Kimberly Besio: Zhang Fei in Yuan Vernacular Literature. Legend, Heroism, and History in the Reproduction of the Three Kingdoms Story. *Journal of Sung-Yüan Studies* 27 (1997), pp. 63–98; Li Fuqing 李福清 (Boris Rifkin): *Sanguo yanyi yu minjian wenxue chuantong* 三國演義與民間文學傳統. Shanghai: Shanghai guji 1997.

7 Studies of this expanded production include Anne E. McLaren: Ming Audiences and Vernacular Hermeneutics. The Uses of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. *T'oung Pao* 81 (1995), pp. 51–80.

8 That is, power was distributed among the three political contenders of *Three Kingdoms* in accordance with a dictum from the Confucian philosopher Mencius 孟子 (4th cent. BCE); see *Mengzi* 2b.1: 'Fortuitous timing is less important than geographical advantage, and geographical advantage is less important than harmonious relationships.' (天時不如地利。地利不如人和。) The state of Wei 魏 had the first, Wu 吳 the second, and Liu Bei's state of Shu Han 蜀漢 clearly had the third.

the twelfth century, as had *Forgotten Events of the Xuanhe Era*. All narrated many of the same events, but with differences that were to be fundamental to generic distinctions. To a greater extent than most historical novels, two also involve figures from popular religion. The Eight Immortals (*baxian* 八仙), and in particular Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓, have appeared for many centuries as playful images on celebratory decorations, although they also figure in religious stories of deliverance, *dutuo* 度脫. Not surprisingly, a novel in which they appear centrally, *Dongyou ji* 東遊記 (Journey to the East, 1596), is replete with stern warnings about life's transience and the dangers of sensual excess. Even so, there Immortal Lü carries out extensive bouts of sexual combat with a prostitute to perfect his own balance of *yang* 陽 and *yin* 陰 essences and thereby enhance his longevity. This inner alchemy, *neidan* 內丹, practice was taken seriously by some, but clearly this novel satirizes such beliefs.

Later in *Journey to the East*, even though he knows that they are fated to be only partially successful, Lü helps strengthen the northern armies for their invasion of the Song Empire. Virtually all readers would know about this painful period of Chinese history: the Song suffered repeated defeats, their reigning and retired emperors taken captive as the government and many of its subjects fled south, ultimately to Hangzhou. But *Journey* drew on an earlier historical novel, from which it clearly sets itself apart. Of the joined pair, *Nan Bei liang Song zhizhuan* 南北兩宋志傳 (Chronicles of the two Song dynasties, South and North), the first narrates the ninth-century consolidation of the Five Dynasties and Ten States; the second is devoted to the Northern Song. It was published in Fujian by the same printer, Yu Xiangdou 余象斗 (ca. 1560–ca. 1637), that produced *Journey to the East* slightly later.[9]

Chronicles of the Northern Song concentrates on the court's ongoing battles with states on their northern frontier, in particular the Northern Han 北漢. The generals of the latter seem invincible; by crafty ploy, the Song emperor wins them over to his side and gives them the family name Yang 楊. Thereafter, successive generations of the Yang family of generals—and their female members—are stalwart defenders of the realm, even though their commitments bring them disaster.

With these doughty warriors, Song attacks another northern neighbor, the Liao empire, which is significantly stronger than previous adversaries. When the Yang family comes to rescue the Song emperor, four of the Yang sons are killed and a fifth captured; another son is killed by intrigue within the Song ranks, and the father commits suicide in anguish. In an effort to strengthen her armies, the Liao Empress Xiao enlists the immortal Lü Dongbin; his interest is primarily with demonstrating that his abilities extend beyond sex and self-perfection. Lü teaches battle strategy to a tree spirit that becomes the Liao military advisor in setting up the mysterious Heaven's Gate Battle Array 天門陣. Finding a key to defeating the array involves the third generation of Yang generals and a battlefield romance with a powerful

9 See the Foreword by Pei Xiaowei 裴效維 in *Yangjia jiang yanyi* 楊家將演義, which was renamed, and is really *Bei Song zhizhuan* 北宋志傳. Beijing: Baowentang shudian 1980, pp. 3–5. These novels must date from around 1590, two of many published around that time.

woman warrior (also a staple of historical fiction); subsequent defeats cause the Song house to engage the women generals of the Yang family as well.

These martial heroes are the central figures in another novel of around the same time, *Yang jiafu shidai zhongyong yanyi zhizhuan* 楊家府時代忠勇演義志傳 (Romantic chronicles of the loyal and brave successive generations of the house of Yang; hereafter The House of Yang). Its preface is dated 1606; probably it was published a few years later than the other two novels in this group. As one might expect from its title, the novel focuses primarily on members of the Yang family. Here their victimization as a result of court machinations and incompetent leadership appears with greater clarity as more members of the family are engaged in their righteous battles from the beginning. The fates of the second generation are likewise adapted somewhat to bring greater attention to their initiative and resourcefulness in the face of enemies within the Song court. Here again immortal Lü Dongbin intervenes by helping with the Liao battle array, and again the senior immortal Zhongli Quan 鍾離權 comes to the aid of the Yangs. Even after the immortals withdraw from human affairs, magic and supernatural events dominate the struggles of the Yangs to preserve their good reputations.

In addition to their differences in subject matter, one can see through these novels differing conceptions of entertainment fiction that produced distinct genres. *Chronicles of the Northern Song* resembles other historical romances of the sixteenth century. It follows the chronology of events relatively closely and limits its characters primarily to those who are factual. *Journey to the East* advances the emerging genre of novels on divine figures by engaging them in historical political struggles. *The House of Yang*, by contrast, brings in a number of new or modified characters to flesh out a family whose adventures are not in general fantastic, but who are no longer limited to names and abilities as outlined in standard historical sources.[10] Later novels on heroic figures were to develop this model further.

Xiyou ji as Structural Model

Journey to the East is often seen as a response to a wonderfully innovative novel first published in Suzhou in 1592, *Xiyou ji* 西遊記 or *Journey to the West*. In its format, use of materials, and innovations it was to set the conventions for most later novels in Chinese. Its language style was significantly more colloquial than that of *The Three Kingdoms*; it is rich in Jiangnan-area terminology and yet it includes more literary expressions, giving it textural complexity. It uses prose for narration and dialogue, long verse sections to describe settings, and succinct poems to comment on characters and scenes. Its sources are oral and written, popular, historical,

10 For a more extended examination of these three novels and their shared content, see Robert E. Hegel: The Emergence of Genres in Early Chinese Novels. In: İker Evrim Binbaş/Nurten Kilic-Schubel (eds): *Horizons of the World. Festschrift for Isenbike Togan*. Istanbul: Itaki 2011, pp. 31–68. An excellent survey of more popular materials on these heroes is: Wilt L. Idema/Stephen H. West: *The Generals of the Yang Family. Four Early Plays*. Hackensack: World Century/World Scientific 2013.

religious, secular, and artistic traditions from various areas. The novel exemplifies 'the storyteller's manner,' a set of phrases and perspectives that are meant to resemble oral performance, including the narrator's comments directed at the audience.[11] It mixes broad humor and wit with profound Buddhist and Daoist philosophy; it is both serious and playful, blending comic scenes with allegorical situations. In all these dimensions, *Journey to the West* became the model for highly self-conscious fiction in Chinese. Few later novels were to reach this level of sophistication in so many aspects.

Unlike some of the later examples in this genre of supernatural or religious novels, known as *shenmo xiaoshuo* 神魔小說 (fiction of gods and monsters), that were attributed to named authors, *Journey to the West* was anonymous. Its adaptation of earlier images to create the Handsome Monkey King, Sun Wukong 美猴王孫悟空, became the model for less-than-all-powerful central characters who converse with gods and bodhisattvas in Heaven, fly to the ends of the earth, fight demons, and represent allegorically the best and worst traits of humanity. Ostensibly the Monkey accompanies a historical monk, Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664), from Xi'an to India to secure scriptures from the Buddha in order to save the backward Chinese. A major portion of the novel's humor lies in its skillful employment of irony to subvert readers' expectations at every stage. Later novels in this genre pale by comparison; they have largely disappeared, while this retains its reputation as one of the four 'masterworks' of the Ming novel.[12]

Like most of the sixteenth-century historical novels, early 'gods and monsters' novels also were published in Jianyang, where they were printed in inexpensive 'illustrations above, text below' 上圖下文 formats. They alternate between seemingly serious hagiography and often unskillful bathos, as did *Journey to the East*. *Tian Fei Niangma zhuan* 天妃娘媽傳 (Life of the Heavenly Consort and Mother, ca. 1600) is a good example: in a novel devoted to the earthly existence of the goddess who protects fishermen and seafarers, Mazu is eclipsed as a character by two demons, an ape and an alligator.[13] The alligator reminds the modern reader of Frank Oz's cowardly lion; he terrorizes creatures much smaller than himself while avoiding any confrontation with major anti-demonic forces.

11 Patrick Hanan: *The Chinese Vernacular Story*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press 1981, pp. 20–22.

12 See Plaks: *Four Masterworks*, pp. 182–276. The origins of the Monkey King are most likely in South Asian religious traditions; his tales apparently came to China along with Buddhist texts late in the Han or during the Six Dynasties period. See: Introduction. In: Anthony C. Yu (trans.): *The Journey to the West* (rev. ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2012, vol. 1, pp. 1–96.

13 Also known as *Tian Fei jishi chushen zhuan* 天妃濟世出身傳 (The Heavenly Consort incarnates to save the world) and *Huguo Tian Fei Lin Niangniang jishi chushen zhengzhuan* 護國天妃林娘娘濟世出身正傳 (The true story of how Mama Lin, the Heavenly Consort and Protector of the State, incarnated to save the world). For a general study of this genre, see Lin Chen 林辰: *Shenguai xiaoshuo shi* 神怪小說史. Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji 1998.

Shuihu zhuan and Embodiments of Heroic Behavior

The House of Yang of 1606 had benefited greatly from earlier developments in how to represent heroic figures in vernacular narrative prose. In contrast to *The Three Kingdoms*, which was largely left unmodified by later editors, stories that became the novel *Zhongyi shuihu zhuan* 忠義水滸傳 (Tales of loyalty and integrity from the marsh, more commonly known as *Outlaws of the Marsh*) circulated in several versions from the middle of the sixteenth century onward. All were anonymous; all clearly bore the imprint of many different hands. Many were published by the same Fujian houses that brought the novel to popularity in the first place.[14]

An adventure novel, *Outlaws of the Marsh* drew heavily on plays and oral tales about groups of bandits and outlaws on the fringes of Northern Song society. These thieves, murderers, butchers, fishermen, vagabonds, and soothsayers become knights-errant who flee normal society because of their own missteps or as the victims of official abuses of power. Each of its 108 heroes has a special nickname, particular martial skills, and often a unique weapon. Thrown together by happenstance, they form ever growing bands until all join in one mountain fastness surrounded by a marsh. The final assembly is historical, and the names of several of its leaders do occur in the historical record. However, this is a substantial move away from the historical romance as it was taking shape: the interest here is in the ties between these heroes and their individual exploits rather than in dramatizing historical events.[15]

The collective purpose of these heroes was never to overthrow the state; most effort is expended in drinking and taking revenge on personal enemies. Once finally assembled, they work together with the Song throne to wipe out other rebel bands, although they never succeed in removing the corrupt court officials that occasioned their exile from society in the first place. The novel winds down with the deaths or dispersal of its central characters. Undoubtedly its appeal stems in part from the portraits of its heroes, but their tragic fate surely appeals as well. There is no alternative for their sacrifice, and the powers that surround the throne are simply unassailable. Thus the novel is politically subversive, challenging by implication the conventional virtues of the Confucian state and, by parody, even family values as well. It glorifies gluttony rather than moderation, personal commitments over adherence to moral standards, and individual bravado over dedication to the collective purpose.[16]

14 On the development of the novel, see Chen Songbo 陳松柏: *Shuihu zhuan yuanliu kaolun* 水滸傳源流考論. Beijing: Renmin wenxue 2006; Liangyan Ge: *Out of the Margins: The Rise of Chinese Vernacular Fiction*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 2001.

15 A very useful compilation of materials on the novel is Ma Tiji 馬蹄疾: *Shuihu ziliao huibian* 水滸資料彙編. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 1980.

16 For a complete and lively translation of this novel, see Sidney Shapiro (trans.): *Outlaws of the Marsh*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press and Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1981. A major study is Plaks: *Four Masterworks*, pp. 279–358; see also Mei Chun: *The Novel and Theatrical Imagination in Early Modern China*. Leiden: Brill 2011, pp. 79–108.

The Radical Alternative: *Jin Ping Mei cihua*

The fourth of the Ming classic novels, *Jin Ping Mei cihua* 金瓶梅詞話 (Poem tale on the Plum in the Golden Vase; the title takes an element from each of three female protagonists' names to create a double-entendre for sexual intercourse) was first published in 1618, although it had already been circulated in manuscript form for decades by that time. Perhaps its initial readers, members of the most highly cultured Jiangnan elite, knew who wrote it, for it seems to have been the work of one dedicated intelligence. But no one ever divulged his identity, leaving it to scholarly speculation.[17]

Probably the initial generation of readers were not particularly interested in knowing; it might have seemed more like a personal attack if they had. The novel begins with long homilies on the evils of heavy drinking, sexual excess, financial greed, and violent emotional outbursts, specifically anger. The novel is cynical about human goodness and abilities to follow moral guidelines and brutal in its frank descriptions of unbridled human desires. It narrates the career in sensuality of a merchant who takes on six wives and numerous other lovers. He makes his fortune by cutthroat commercial competition and by currying favor with the powerful, exploiting everyone who reveals a weakness. His sexual conquests are often described in great detail, albeit generally through euphemisms; true affection between characters is only rarely demonstrated and seldom lasts. There are no characters that are attractive sentimentally, nor is it a simple morality tale: the few characters who have moral scruples are not necessarily allowed a good ending, either. It is altogether a devastating exposure of human self-indulgence at the extreme.

In formal terms, *Plum in the Golden Vase* was pioneering. Recent scholarship has demonstrated how carefully it was structured, its hundred chapters divided to matching halves, each ten chapters constituting a narrative arc in themselves, with reflections and opposites of scenes and situations occurring at matching intervals throughout each half. Moreover, much of its action, descriptions, and even dialogue is heavily indebted to current popular culture: jokes, parables, songs sung in the brothels, storyteller's tales, and common turns of phrase were quoted or parodied, often with droll humor. All are stitched together generally seamlessly to form a compelling narrative that has never been equaled as a literary pastiche in Chinese.[18]

17 Soon after its first publication, it appeared in an illustrated edition with commentary (the 'Chongzhen *ben*' 崇禎本); late in that century it appeared with an extensive commentary by Zhang Zhupo 張竹坡 (1670–1698). See Patrick D. Hanan: The Text of the *Chin p'ing mei*. *Asia Major* n.s. 9, no.1 (1962), pp. 1–57; and David L. Rolston (ed.): *How to Read the Chinese Novel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1990, pp. 439–46.

18 Andrew Plaks has provided the most detailed analysis of these structural features; see his *Four Masterworks*, pp. 55–180. David Roy's heavily annotated translation, more than any original edition, identifies the depth of the novel's engagement with contemporary culture; see: *The Plum in the Golden Vase or, Chin P'ing Mei*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993–2013, and his 'Introduction' in: Vol. 1, pp. xvii–xlviii.

The novel's action begins with scenes borrowed from *Outlaws of the Marsh*: the diminutive brother of a martial hero, Wu Song 武松, marries a beautiful and lusty young woman, Pan Jinlian 潘金蓮; dissatisfied with her mate, she casts eyes on Wu Song, who avoids her and goes away. Through a long and painstaking seduction she begins an affair with Ximen Qing 西門慶, the central merchant of the later novel; together they collaborate to kill her husband. Once Jinlian becomes Ximen's fifth wife she endeavors ever afterward to monopolize his desires and activities. Her failures make her cruel in her demands; ultimately she causes his demise from sexual depletion. The bulk of this novel fits within one extended episode of *Outlaws of the Marsh*; ultimately Wu Song returns to avenge his brother by beheading Jinlian.

Generally considered a pornographic novel, *Plum in the Golden Vase* has frequently been banned or at least heavily bowdlerized ever since its first appearance. It owes something of its devotion to sexual description to a series of erotic classical language stories that were popular among the elite early in the sixteenth century.[19] In turn, it spawned a series of pornographic novels written in the vernacular. Even so, none comes even close as an indictment of society; most lack its artistic depth as well as its moral seriousness. It did share some concerns with another genre of novels popular at about the same time, however.

These were crime novels, *gong'an xiaoshuo* 公案小說, that were popular for several decades around 1600 and then largely disappeared by the 1620s. The interest in Lord Bao 包公, the upright judge, had been strong ever since the eleventh century, during the Song; now other texts featured additional insightful magistrates. Some were based on reports of real crimes committed during the Ming or earlier periods. Despite their classification as novels, each title is a collection of semi-fictionalized or imagined crime reports, the focus being on how the magistrate in charge of the case discovers the culprit and explains the crime. Like *Plum in the Golden Vase*, they reveal the wages of excessive behavior, of illicit acts, and of unbridled emotional outbursts. Although several of these collections virtually disappeared within two decades of their publication, the idea of the righteous magistrate did not lose its currency; *Longtu gong'an* 龍圖公案 (The cases of [Magistrate Bao] Longtu) continued to circulate as one of the most commonly reprinted works of fiction during the Qing.[20] Then in the nineteenth century a new genre, the novels of knight-errantry (*xiayi gong'an xiaoshuo* 俠義公案小說), appeared, an outgrowth of tales of model administrators and their extra-legal powers for punishing the evil and rewarding the good, now extended to their assistants as well.[21]

19 Richard G. Wang: *Ming Erotic Novellas: Genre, Consumption, and Religiosity in Cultural Practice*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press 2011.

20 For figures on numbers of editions, see Robert E. Hegel: *Reading Illustrated Fiction in Late Imperial China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press 1998, p. 65, Table 2.4, and p. 382 n77.

21 See, for example, Chapter 27 in Lu Xun 魯迅: *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe* 中國小說史略. Hong Kong: Sanlian 1958.

The Role of Commentary in Reading

Classical fiction commentary had begun during the Song period but only gradually came to play an important role in vernacular fiction. The titles of late sixteenth-century historical novels often advertised that they were illustrated and bore commentary, but most had only sparse notes on odd terms and place names. An important figure in this aspect of novel history as well, the Jianyang publisher Yu Xiangdou 余象斗 (ca. 1550–1637) began printing novels with commentary by the end of the sixteenth century. Most of his notes are historical information or subjective remarks on characters; they seem to have been intended as a commercial enhancement for his imprints rather than to elucidate the stories themselves.[22] Few of these early commentaries made any general critical observations on fiction. However, by around 1600 commentaries began to play a much more significant role in shaping the reader's experience of the text, marking a step forward in the development of the novel.

In contrast to more formal writings that were originally unpunctuated, by 1600 novels were commonly highlighted with dots (*dian* 點) for emphasis as well as for punctuation of sentences (a practice known as *quandian* 圈點). Close readings of the text called either *pi* 批 (added remarks) or *ping* 評 (evaluation) began during the early seventeenth century through annotations attributed to one Li Zhuowu 李卓吾, starting in a 1610 edition of *Outlaws of the Marsh*. This informal name was meant to suggest that the commentary was written by the maverick Confucian philosopher Li Zhi 李贄 (1527–1602), but it appears that all of the 'Li Zhuowu' commentaries on novels and plays were the work of one Ye Zhou 葉晝 (Ye Yangkai 葉陽開, *fl.* 1595–1624) after the philosopher's death.[23] A poor but apparently erudite scholar, Ye seems to have supported himself as a professional writer.[24] Surely comments attributed to the notorious Li Zhi would be seen as more authoritative, and worth reading—and probably sell more books—than anything under the name of a relative unknown such as Ye Zhou.[25]

The 'Li Zhuowu' commentary in editions of *Three Kingdoms* occurs between the lines of text and at the ends of chapters (*zongping* 總評, 'general comments'). Most of the former are 'readerly' in that they respond emotionally to events in the narrative rather than analyzing the fiction at any higher level of abstraction. They both exemplify and invite participation in interpretation of the narrative. Many are lighthearted. Ye Zhou seems to have initiated the

22 For extended study of Yu Xiangdou's impact on the development of the novel, see Lin Yaling 林雅玲: *Yu Xiangdou xiaoshuo pingdian ji chuban wenhua yanjiu* 余象斗小說評點及出版文化研究. Taibei: Liren shuju 2009.

23 See Rolston, *How to Read*, pp. 3–41, and 356–63. The fullest treatment by far is David L. Rolston: *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentaries*. Stanford: Stanford University Press 1997, especially pp. 3, 31–35, 66n, 77n, 113-14, 181, 184, 222.

24 Liu Haiyan 劉海燕: *Ming Qing 'Sanguo zhi yanyi' wenben yanbian yu pingdian yanjiu* 明清三國志演義文本演變與評點研究. Fuzhou: Haixia, Fujian renmin 2010, pp. 108–10.

25 For the most recent scholarship on Li Zhi, see Rivi Handler-Spitz (ed.): *The Objectionable Li Zhi: Fiction, Syncretism, and Dissent in Late Ming China*. In preparation.

use of chapter ending comments in imitation of the ancient historian Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 85 BCE); many are moralistic reflections on the decisions made and actions taken by the characters. In all cases the commentary seeks to reveal aspects of the text and its action, or of the art of writing, that might otherwise be overlooked during a less careful reading. This commentator, and those to follow, insisted on the seriousness of vernacular fiction in the reader's aesthetic and moral education. Their regular concerns included structure, clarity of representation, and the power of the text to move the reader emotionally. In effect, they placed the *reading* of fiction, if not necessarily its content, on a par with the importance that accrued to the reading of standard essays for the civil service examinations and even formal histories.[26]

Most of the 'Li Zhuowu' interlinear comments are terse, some only one word (*Hua* 畫 'Like a painting!'), but others praise the writer's skill (*Wen qing shen miao* 文情甚妙 'Marvelous in action and description!' *Miao shou* 妙手 'A marvelous hand!'). Comments in *Three Kingdoms* often criticize awkward grammar or wording. But a more important comment is the frequent comment, *qu*! 趣 (Interesting!); this identified items of aesthetic 'taste' for a discerning reader. Creating stories of 'interest' should be the primary goal of fiction writers, declares one general commentary. Often his approval is won by what Ye Zhou identifies as *zhen qing* 真情 ('true feeling' or 'real situations'); his praise is often reserved for bold and spontaneous action on the part of heroic characters. By contrast, the commentary often heaps scorn on unthinking adherence to precedent and as frequently mocks figures in positions of authority, whether in government or in a bandit gang. Many comments link fictional events with those in the real world. Reading fiction is not only a pastime for this 'Li Zhuowu' figure; even the most fanciful figures can reflect on human foibles and lead to insights about the human condition. Consequently the language of philosophical explanation appears in his comments on passages in *Journey to the West* that refer to the illusory nature of perceived reality and enlightenment.

Based on his close reading, Ye Zhou frequently drew attention to ironic gaps between what a narrator says about a character and the character's actions, occasionally labeling this 'moral hypocrisy,' *jia daoxue* 假道學. In his *Three Kingdoms* commentary especially, he regularly points out passages that should be cut or edited. In *Journey to the West* he praises the novelist's 'extraordinary imagination' (*huan bi* 幻筆) and his 'fanciful writing' (*ji ling ji miao wenbi* 極靈極妙文筆). Throughout his commentaries, Ye Zhou maintains an authoritative stance, that of one who is deeply experienced in reading and who has sophisticated tastes and thus can function as instructor in the narrative arts. This approach echoes the refrain that frequently appears in prefaces to novels, that they are also appropriate reading material for women and for young men who are engaged in preparation for the civil service examinations.

By the 1630s many lesser novels and plays were sporting commentaries attributed to other cultural figures of a previous generation, but most of these were borrowed from Ye Zhou. Derivative as they were, evaluative and interpretive commentaries of the sort developed by

26 Robert E. Hegel/Maria Franca Sibau: Introduction: *Sanguo zhi yanyi* Chapters 48 and 49. *Renditions* 81–82 (2014), pp. 129–37.

Ye Zhou had by the 1620s become conventional for the novel, along with the close critical reading this tradition endorsed. Only in the 1640s did fiction commentary take a substantial step forward through the efforts of Jin Shengtan 金聖嘆 (1606–1661) and his monumental work on *Outlaws of the Marsh*.[27]

The Seventeenth-Century Turn

Parallel to the development of fiction commentary, novels appeared in the first decades of the seventeenth century in which key elements were markedly more refined than in their predecessors. Characters here are more complex morally and psychologically; satire and irony are used more skillfully and figure more prominently in these later novels. Language styles had developed in response to genre differentiation: historical and crime case tales were generally more classical in style, others were more colloquial, although no novel was necessarily exclusively in one style of language or the other at this stage of the development of the form. Ever more clearly, novels were identifiable as the work of individual authors.[28]

San Sui ping yao zhuan 三遂平妖傳 (The three Sui quell the demons' revolt) was published anonymously around 1600 with fine images by a known Jiangnan illustrator. It is a short book, easy to misunderstand as incomplete because its narrative line is not fully coherent and its characterization seems inconsistent.[29] Even so, as rollicking vignettes of sorcerers and their ultimate downfall, the novel constitutes a scathing satire of the slightly earlier novels of gods and monsters: its divinely empowered wizards are not so much awe-inspiring as they are petty, venal, and hilarious in their buffoonery. Its play with fantasy is delightful, and in its very 'incompleteness' the novel may have been intended to subvert the conventional plot with all ends tied up at its conclusion.[30] It also deliberately distorts the historical facts

27 Rolston: *How to Read*, pp. 38–39; Rolston: *Traditional Chinese Fiction*, pp. 1–11; for specific examples, see Hegel, Performing Li Zhi. In: Rivi Handler-Spitz (ed.): *The Objectionable Li Zhi*.

28 The implications of individual authorship are most clearly drawn out by Plaks, *The Four Masterworks*, although the argument would seem to fit fiction produced after *Plum in the Golden Vase* appeared rather than its predecessors among the major novels, it would appear. Plaks sees these developments as a consequence of greater emphasis on individual subjectivity in the philosophy of Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529).

29 Initially, Patrick Hanan viewed its eccentricities as the product of its being primitive, presumably dating from the middle of the sixteenth century, despite the lack of evidence for that conclusion. See Patrick Hanan: Composition of the P'ing yao chuan. *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 31 (1971), pp. 206–07. Hanan notes, pp. 202–03, that the only extant edition gives the place of printing as Hangzhou in three of its four *juan* and Jinling (Nanjing) in the fourth.

30 For a lengthy study and translation, see Lois Fusek (trans.): *The Three Sui Quash the Demons' Revolt.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press 2010 (in which she rightly describes it as a 'comic novel'), and the forthcoming translation by Patrick Hanan. In or around 1620 the professional writer Feng Menglong 馮

concerning a minor eleventh-century rebellion to question the adherence to the historical record in creating entertaining stories.

A similar spirit of relaxation about historical fact can be seen in the anonymous 1631 novel *Sui Yangdi yanshi* 隋煬帝艷史 (The merry adventures of the Sui Emperor Yang). Yang was notorious for his life of dissipation and his extravagant use of state resources to build pleasure palaces stocked with attractive young women for his personal gratification. His excesses are narrated here in considerable detail, accompanied by excellent illustrations elegantly inscribed with verse comments. But his image is complicated by the addition of two upright and faithful followers, the dwarf Wang Yi 王義 and his consort, Zhu Gui'er 朱貴兒; they devote themselves to him even unto death. Through their loyalty the reader is invited to perceive the complicated humanity of the emperor himself. In this, the novel turns historiography on its head to evoke sympathy for a figure conventionally considered a fool who lost his dynasty.[31]

In 1633, the dramatist Yuan Yuling 袁于令 (Yuan Jin 袁晉, 1592–1674) published his historical novel, *Sui shi yiwen* 隋史遺文 (Forgotten tales of the Sui). Like *The Three Sui*, *Forgotten Tales* also disregarded recorded events to make up a good story—at least in the first two-thirds of the novel. Up to that point it traces the misadventures of the heir of a line of generals in his efforts to establish himself as a man of honor worthy of the legacy. This figure, Qin Shubao 秦叔寶 (d. 638), was historical, but the novelist creates for him a period of maturation filled with blunders and misjudgments, until finally he comes to the attention to Li Shimin 李世民 (r. 627–649), a general and co-founder of the Tang dynasty. From then onward the novel adheres generally to recorded history and Qin Shubao becomes just another loyal general in the process. Even so, the youthful hero is one of the more memorable creations in historical fiction; like the Sui Emperor Yang he marked a new direction in freer adaptation of historical figures and more imaginative creation of event and motivation. It is also significant that both *The Merry Adventures* and *Forgotten Tales* are very similar to *Journey to the West* in structure: the novels have even numbers of chapters (40 and 60 respectively in these two), each chapter title is in the form of a poetic couplet, the style of language includes a range of prose registers but also poems commenting on the action from the narrator's detached perspective. Clearly *Journey* was the model that came to exemplify the late imperial novel in Chinese.[32]

At about the same time, other writers of the late Ming turned from history to writing about issues and persons of their own time. These novels, called *shishi xiaoshuo* 時事小說 (novels of contemporary events), paralleled a trend in theater to dramatize, fancifully, political figures and actions of the present. This could be a politically dangerous business, although some of the first in the genre, centering on the widely hated eunuch Wei Zhongxian 魏忠賢 (1568–1627), were penned soon after his fall from power and death. One, *Wei Zhongxian xiaoshuo Chijian*

夢龍 (1574–1646) was to rewrite the novel by filling in the 'missing' parts to create a more coherent plot, thereby obscuring much of what made the older novel adventurous and interesting.

31 Robert E. Hegel: *The Novel in Seventeenth-Century China*. New York: Columbia University Press 1981, pp. 84–111.

32 See Hegel, *Novel in Seventeenth-Century China*, pp. 112–39.

shu 魏忠賢小説斥奸書 (Condemning the traitor: a novel of Wei Zhongxian, 1628), has been attributed to the Hangzhou publisher Lu Yunlong 陸雲龍 (1587–1666).[33] It narrates its eponymous character's adventures as he flees famine and experiences wild swings of fortune thereafter, in part through his own shortcomings and in part because of uncontrollable external forces. Wei seems at least as complex as Ximen Qing in *Plum in the Golden Vase* but carries far more specific political relevance. The author imagines events among the palace eunuchs (whose ranks Wei joins after castrating himself in frustration over his penury) with considerable detail as through guile and happenstance Wei earns the confidence of a new and incompetent emperor to become de facto ruler of the state. Other novels incorporate tales of Wei Zhongxian into a general and more thorough indictment of the lack of leadership in the Ming capital and its devastating effects across the realm. One such novel is *Qiaoshi tongsu yanyi* 樵史通俗演義 (The woodcutter's history: a popular romance) of about 1645, written in the teeth of cataclysmic dynastic change.[34]

Conclusions

A survey of collections of rare Ming period novels in libraries around the world reveals a striking range of quality of printing among them. That is, the Jianyang, Fujian imprints of novels are generally relatively small in size, their paper relatively dark, and the carving of their printing blocks often quite crude, to the extent that the illustrations can be ugly and the text hard to read. It is not that Jianyang printers were unable to produce fine books; they clearly chose this format and printing quality for the bulk of the early historical novels, the crime case tales, and the stories of gods and ghosts. Presumably they were intended for readers of modest means. Although there are few exceptions earlier, by the turn of the seventeenth century only the Jiangnan area printers produced fine editions of novels, most likely for a more affluent reading public. Their paper was lighter in color, their illustrations often more complex and finely drawn, the execution of both text and images done with care and obvious skill. Not surprisingly, many of these fine illustrations bear the name of their creator, usually the illustrator and the carver of illustrations in one person. Novels considered to be artistic literary productions (the 'literati novels', *wenren xiaoshuo* 文人小說) appeared frequently, but never exclusively, in these relatively fine editions.

33 Gu Keyong 顧克勇: *Shufang zhuzuojia Lu Yunlong xiongdi yanjiu* 書坊主作家陸雲龍兄弟研究. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan 2010, presents ample proof that Lu did write it, although he concludes that Lu printed, but did not write, a collection of stories on contemporary events, *Qingye zhong* 清夜鐘; see especially pp. 9, 9n1, 10.

34 Recently scholars have identified its author as the Songjiang area poet Lu Yingyang 陸應暘 (also known as Lu Hongyan 陸鴻雁, ca. 1572–ca.1658), who passed only the lowest level of civil service examinations before giving up.

These differences suggest distinctions in intended audiences, at least on the part of publishers and book merchants. Although a relatively affluent book buyer could afford any book he wished to acquire (and many bought old and rare books as well), the student, the unemployed scholar, and the educated merchant or literate shopkeeper might be limited in his reading by book prices. Because Ming masterworks appeared in both fine and cheap editions, a relatively poor reader still had access to what later became the classics of the form. The transient popularity of early novels of historical periods, gods and monsters, and crime fiction in cheap editions suggests that the broad reading public played a role in the rise and fall of fashions in Chinese vernacular fiction in late imperial China. Moreover, the commentator Ye Zhou demonstrated the personal joys of reading fiction closely, as well as the potential value of novels in learning to live as well as to write. Growing self-consciousness among fiction writers, with attendant developments in theme, plotting, characterization and the uses of irony and satire, can only be seen as characteristics shared with novels in other cultures, the emphasis on newness and novelty being a noteworthy characteristic of the Chinese novel as well. In addition, by satirizing earlier works of fiction, writers demonstrated that conventions were sufficiently familiar that they could be made fun of and readers would get the joke. Clearly, by the 1620s a mature reading audience for vernacular fiction existed; the Chinese novel had come of age.

II
Print Culture at the Threshold of Modernity in Late Imperial and Republican China, 1860–1949

3
Absolutely Not a Business: Chinese Buddhist Scriptural Presses and Distributors, 1860s–1930s

Gregory Adam Scott

This chapter[1] argues that several of the Buddhist xylographic scriptural presses that emerged in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century China adopted many practices from commercial publishing enterprises, while strongly maintaining the position that their religious publishing endeavours were fundamentally different from that of business-oriented publishers. Through a brief examination of the budgetary procedures and financial reports of a few presses, I aim to demonstrate that even these types of religious presses, which on the face of it were highly conservative, adopted specific material and social technologies of the modern era to expand the size and reach of their printing enterprises. In doing so they did not radically break with the patrimony of Chinese Buddhist print culture, but rather extended it with new technologies and methods.

Introduction

Buddhist scriptural presses (*Fojing kejingchu* 佛經刻經處) were a new form of Chinese publishing institution that were first organized by groups of Buddhists in the latter part of the nineteenth century to produce and distribute religious texts. Their core aims were to spread the Buddhist teachings (the Dharma) and to generate religious merit, and in this they resembled earlier, largely monastery-based scriptoria, even continuing to use traditional xylographic (woodblock) printing (*diaoban yinshua* 雕版印刷) during an era when mechanized movable type was giving rise to an unprecedented volume and variety of printed works. Yet while most of them remained expressly not-for-profit and saw themselves as categorically different from businesses, nearly all of them selectively adopted aspects of the modern commercial publishing enterprise. They joined networks of product distribution, organized boards of directors, maintained business assets and investments, published financial reports, and some even issued stock and paid dividends to investors. By means of book catalogues and mail order, Buddhist publications became available for purchase across China

1 This chapter is based in part on Gregory Adam Scott: Conversion by the Book: Buddhist Print Culture in Early Republican China (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2013) as well as subsequent research presented at the workshop on 'Asian Buddhism: Plural Colonialisms and Plural Modernities' at Kyoto and Ryukoku Universities in December 2014.

and in Chinese communities overseas, greatly expanding the size of their reading market.[2] In this study I briefly review a selection of Buddhist xylographic printing and distribution institutions that were in operation from the 1860s to the 1930s, examining how they used commercial technologies from the world of commercial publishing in their meritorious and religious enterprises. Elizabeth Eisenstein famously called the printing press an 'agent of [historical] change'; in the case of Chinese Buddhist scriptural presses, it was not the press itself but rather a cluster of social and organizational print 'technologies' that enabled their development and the emergence of a network through which tens of thousands of Buddhist scriptural texts were transmitted.[3] Examining how these publishers integrated new techniques into their print traditions, and how those traditions were re-imagined as a result, provides a revealing window on the cultural and religious history of modern China.

In this study I focus on six Buddhist publishing institutions: the Jinling Scriptural Press, the Beijing and Tianjin Scriptural Presses, the Beijing and Tianjin Scripture Distributors, and the Central Scriptural Press. All were engaged in the task of producing and/or distributing printed Buddhist texts, and the latter five all had strong institutional and cultural connections to the Jinling press, which provided the model for much of Chinese Buddhist publishing in this period. While these presses were immensely productive, they normally only appear at the margins of histories of publishing and print culture in modern China, if they are mentioned at all. Recently a series of reprinted book catalogues and a number of researchers working on religion in this period have started to reveal the full scope of Buddhist publishing during this era. My discussions in this chapter will outline how these publishing institutions came about, and how they integrated longstanding patterns of publishing for merit with new models of management, distribution, publicity, and economics.

Textual Culture and Print Culture in Chinese Buddhist History

Textual culture was already well-established in China by the time that Buddhism was introduced around the beginning of the common era, and by the middle of the second century CE the capital city of Luoyang 洛陽 had become an important centre of scriptural translation. The types of Buddhist scriptures in circulation embodied a type of power that Alan Cole has termed a 'displaced paternal authority', and were further understood to function as engines of merit generation, bringing unrivalled benefits and blessings to those who produced and

2 The Imperial Post was founded in 1896 and began to replace longstanding networks of private and official courier networks. See Hosea Ballou Morse: *The Trade and Administration of China*. London, New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 1913, pp. 392–409.

3 Elizabeth Eisenstein: *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe*. 2 Vols.. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press 1991 (1979).

disseminated them.[4] Xylography, first used to reproduce small motifs, was quickly adopted to print Buddhist scriptural texts, with the earliest dated printed work in history being a scroll of the *Diamond Sūtra* (*Jin'gang boreboluomiduo jing* 金剛般若波羅蜜多經) from 868 CE.[5] Printing was still used on a relatively limited scale, primarily for reproducing religious and almanac works, up to about the tenth century CE, when the Chinese book market began to expand rapidly and its greater cost effectiveness for larger print runs gave rise to a much greater availability of printed texts.[6] The essential technical procedures of xylography have likely changed little over most of its history: wood blocks, usually from a pear, jujube, or catalpa tree, are soaked in water or boiled, then dried, planed and polished on both sides, so that two pages can be printed from a single block. The manuscript is transcribed on to thin sheets of paper and the inked text transferred to one face of the block, and a variety of tools are used to carve away the surface of the wood, leaving characters and images in relief. Mistakes in carving can be corrected by replacing a small wedge-shaped area of the block surface or by inlaying a new piece for a larger area. Once cleaned and washed, the block is ready for printing; it is held on a table and inked with a brush, then a sheet of paper is placed over it and a pad rubbed against the blank side to transfer the image to the paper. A block may be printed some 15,000 times before needing minor repairs, after which another 10,000 to 25,000 prints can be made, and blocks can be stored indefinitely between printings.[7] Xylographic books in China have a distinctive page layout, with the text matrix spanning two pages so that the centre column straddles the folded edge.

4 Erik Zürcher: *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*. Third Edition with Foreword by Stephen F. Teiser. Leiden: Brill 2007 (1959), pp. 23–24, 28–36; Alan Cole: *Text as Father: Paternal Seductions in Early Mahāyāna Buddhist Literature*. Berkeley: University of California Press 2005, pp. 4–7; Gregory Schopen: The Phrase *sa prthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet* in the *Vajracchedikā*: Notes on the Cult of the Book in Mahāyāna and On Sending the Monks Back to Their Books: Cult and Conservatism in Early Mahāyāna Buddhism in his: *Figments and Fragments of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India: More Collected Papers*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press 2005, pp. 25–62, 108–53; John S. Strong: *Relics of the Buddha*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 2004, pp. 8–10.

5 Other printed works discovered in Japan and Korea may predate the *Diamond Sūtra* scroll, but they cannot yet be dated conclusively. See Lothar Ledderose: *Ten Thousand Things: Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 2000, pp. 151–52. This *Diamond Sūtra* edition is held in the British Library, item Or.8310/P.2.

6 Edward Martinique: *Chinese Traditional Bookbinding: A Study of its Evolution and Technique*. San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center 1983; Cynthia J. Brokaw: On the History of the Book in China. In: Cynthia J. Brokaw/Kai-wing Chow (eds): *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*. Berkeley: University of California Press 2005, pp. 23–24; Susan Cherniack: Book Culture and Textual Transmission in Sung China. *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 54:1 (1994), pp. 5–125.

7 Description based in part on Tsien Tsuen-Hsuin 錢存訓: *Paper and Printing.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1985 (Science and Civilisation in China, Volume 5: Chemistry and Chemical Technology), pp. 194-201. For a first-hand account of xylographic printing, see Hedda M. Morrison: Making Books in China. *Canadian Geographical Journal* 38-39 (1949), pp. 232–43.

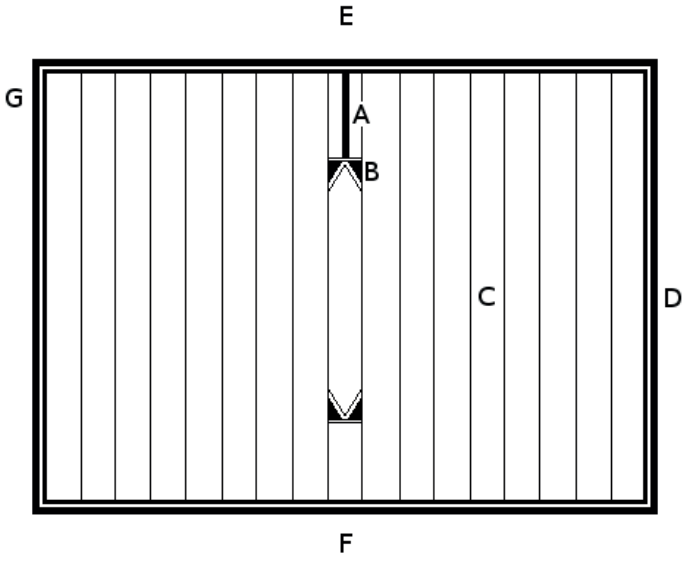


Figure 1: Xylographic Page Layout. A: Elephant Trunk (*xiangbi* 象鼻); B: Fish Tail (*yuwei* 魚尾); C: Column (*hangge* 行格) defined by Borderline (*jie* 界); D: Marginal Line (*bianlan* 邊欄); E: Book Eyebrow (*shumei* 書眉) or Heavenly Head (*tiantou* 天頭); F: Earthly Foot (*dijue* 地腳); G: Book Ear (*shuer* 書耳). Figure based on Tsien, Paper and Printing, pp. 222–23.

Xylographic print technology was used to produce countless individual scriptural volumes, as well as most major editions of the Sinitic Buddhist scriptural canon.The first time xylography was used to print a complete Buddhist canon occurred a century after the printing of the *Diamond Sūtra* scroll mentioned above. The publication of the Buddhist canon in China was a monumental task that entailed the collecting, selecting, editing, organizing, cataloguing, and printing of thousands of fascicles of text, and involved the coordinated mobilization of donors, translators, editors, libraries, and printers.[8] The earliest printed Chinese Buddhist scriptural canon, the Kaibao 開寶 Canon, was carved in the late tenth century CE. It included some 1,076 titles, involved a large team of translators, editors and other craftspeople to produce, and is said to have required 130,000 blocks that took twelve years to produce. At least seven other major canon collections were printed during the Song dynasty (960–1279), but the technology and means to undertake large publishing projects were still limited to a

8 The fascicle (*juan* 卷, a scroll or curl) is a section of text whose name is derived from when long manuscripts spanned multiple scrolls of material. Its length in characters varies widely.

few urban centres and temples.[9] Xylographic technology was likely not widespread in China until as late as the Jiajing 嘉靖 era (1522–1567) of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). Along with a rapidly expanding population and economy, the Ming also saw the rise of new regional centres of printing, especially in Fujian 福建 province and the Jiangnan 江南 region of eastern China.[10] During the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) the publishing world in China became dominated by a large number of regional workshops and a nationwide network of printer-retailers, who were producing a remarkably homogeneous core of bestsellers for a much broader readership.[11]

Thus by the middle of the nineteenth century, xylographic printing was a well-established technology in China. Printing expertise was available through local craftspeople and specialist workshops, literacy was relatively common, and publishing religious works was a widely-accepted form of generating merit. Participants in Buddhist print culture had established their own open corpus of texts, bibliographic studies, and catalogues of canonical works. Apart from editions of the canon, most Buddhist publishing was the product of temple scriptoria (*jingfang* 經房/坊), where monastic publishers drew upon extensive temple libraries and storehouses of printing blocks to compile their new editions.[12] One of the most important areas for Buddhist scriptural printing was Jiangnan 江南, where the wealth of regional elites had, particularly from the Ming dynasty onward, supported the construction of temples and the livelihood of monastics.[13] When the rebellion of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom (*Taiping Tianguo* 太平天国) erupted from 1850 to 1864 causing the deaths of millions, many temples in the Jiangnan region were destroyed in battles between Taiping and Loyalist forces. Many major Buddhist monastic libraries and scriptoria were lost, and although the major ordination centres such as Jinshan 金山 were rebuilt within a decade after the rebellion was suppressed, the libraries and storehouses of woodblocks were rather more difficult to replace than bricks and stone.

9 Shi Dao'an 釋道安: *Zhongguo dazangjing diaoke shihua* 中國大藏經雕刻史話. (N.p.): Zhonghua dadian bianyin hui 1978, pp. 61–72.

10 Brokaw, History of the Book in China, pp. 24–27. On the Ming dynasty expansion of print, see Joseph McDermott: The Ascendance of the Imprint in China. In: Brokaw/Chow: *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, pp. 57–93.

11 Brokaw, History of the Book in China, pp. 27-30; Cynthia Brokaw: Commercial Woodblock Publishing in the Qing (1644–1911) and the Transition to Modern Print Technology. In: Cynthia Brokaw, Christopher A. Reed (eds): *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition, circa 1800 to 2008*. Leiden: Brill 2010 , pp. 40–44.

12 While *jingfang* 經房 is often used to refer to the printer of scriptural texts, the term more precisely refers to the scriptural hall or repository within a temple. *Jingfang* 經坊, on the other hand, indicates a 'workshop for [producing] scriptures.'

13 Timothy Brook: *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center 1994.

Yang Wenhui and the Jinling Scriptural Press

> Since the volumes of the Jiaxing-era Lengyan temple were destroyed in the conflagration of war, those who research Buddhism have suffered from a lack of good editions. During the former Qing dynasty, Layman Yang Wenhui from Chizhou worked together with scriptoria in Yangzhou and elsewhere to carve and print scriptures. For forty years now, well-edited and well-carved, [they] have long been spread widely across the nation.[14]

Buddhist publishers, editors, authors, and historians of Buddhism in modern China widely credit the lay publisher Yang Wenhui 楊文會 (1837–1911) with inaugurating a post-Taiping resurgence in Buddhist xylographic publishing.[15] His Jinling Scriptural Press (*Jinling kejing chu* 金陵刻經處), and more than a dozen later presses that emulated it, were organized unlike anything that had preceded it in East Asian Buddhist history. The Jinling imprint was first used in 1866, when Yang raised the funds to print an edition of *Jingtu sijing* 淨土四經 (Four Pure Land Scriptures) edited by the scholar Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794–1857).[16] Two years later Yang and his partners formally inaugurated the press with the composition of a charter (*zhangcheng* 章程) that required each member to contribute 5,600 cash per month; with ten partners the operating budget was 56,000 cash per month, the bulk of which would support a calligrapher and eight carvers, the remainder going to a monastic director and two assistants. In the Jinling press were combined several elements of scriptural publishing outlined in the previous section. In the past, canons had been published by imperial printers and temple presses, and laypeople had sponsored the printing of individual scriptures, often for the purpose of generating religious merit. Yang's press, however, was established outside of the state apparatus, and was financed by lay people and managed by monastics. The press itself was not intended to function as a monastic space; it did not require resident monks to perform confession (*jingchan* 經懺), nor did it have facilities to host visiting monastics as in a public monastery.[17] The press thus established a model of combining lay and monastic leadership into an organization with a published corporate charter, a set funding structure, and permanent non-temple physical structures such as offices and workshops. The first major

14『自嘉興楞嚴寺書本藏經燬於兵燹，研究佛學者苦乏善本．池州楊仁山居士，於前清時，會同揚州等處經房，刊刻藏經．垂四十載，校刻精好，久已風行海內．』Punctuation added. *Foxue congbao* 佛學叢報, issue 12 (June 15, 1914), reprinted in Huang Xianian 黃夏年 (ed.): *Minguo Fojiao qikan wenxian jicheng* 民國佛教期刊文獻集成, 209 vols. Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin 2006, vol. 4, p. 551. This work is hereafter cited as *MFQ*.

15 On Yang, see Gabriele Goldfuss: *Vers un bouddhisme du XXe siècle. Yang Wenhui (1837–1911), réformateur laïque et imprimeur*. Paris: Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises 2001, and Luo Cheng 羅琤: *Jinling kejing chu yanjiu* 金陵刻經處研究. Shanghai: Shanghai shehuikexueyuan chubanshe 2010.

16 On Wei and Buddhism, see Li Jianguang 李建光: Wei Yuan xuanze jingtu zong de dongyin ji dui jindai jushi Foxue de gongxian 魏源選擇淨土宗的動因及對近代居士佛學的貢獻. *Qiusuo* 6 (2007), pp. 136–37.

17 Goldfuss, *Vers un bouddhisme du XXe siècle*, p. 54.

project planned for the Jinling imprint had been the publication of the complete Buddhist canon (*quan zang* 全藏). A Jinling canon would take the place of the *Longzang* edition, one that Yang and his partners regarded as a 'museum piece', and would help make up for the loss of Jiangnan-area temple libraries described above. Such a canon would not, however, be produced during Yang's lifetime; the capital and labour requirements were simply too high. The Jinling Scriptural press did, however, produce hundreds of individual titles of scriptural publications.[18]

Yang had received a traditional education based on the Chinese classical corpus, but he took full advantage of the new possibilities offered by the nineteenth century: new modes of learning, international travel, and interactions with foreigners. In 1878 he was invited to join a diplomatic mission to England and France, and in 1886 Yang visited England again, where he met the Oxford orientalist scholar Max Müller (1823–1900) and his then student the Japanese Buddhist priest Nanjō Bunyū 南条文雄 (1849–1927). Yang and Nanjō would remain in contact with each other via written correspondence, and through Nanjō Yang was able to procure copies of Buddhist scriptures from Japan that had been lost in China to reprint through his press.[19] In 1884 Yang met the Welsh Baptist missionary Timothy Richard (1845–1919) while the latter was in Nanjing collecting Buddhist texts to support his study of Chinese religions. In 1894 the pair collaborated on a translation of the Buddhist text *Dasheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論 (Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith) into English, but Yang was reportedly unsatisfied with Richard's interpretation of the scripture through a Christian lens.[20] At the end of the previous year Yang had met with Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933) while the latter was en route to Sri Lanka, coming from having attended the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago. Yang came from Nanjing especially to hear Dharmapala speak at Longhua Temple 龍華寺 in Shanghai, and remained in touch with him in the years that followed.[21] After 1897, when the Jinling press was given its own dedicated buildings on Yang's Nanjing estate, Yang made use of the site to establish an experimental school for lay and monastic Buddhists. The Jetavana Hermitage (Qihuan jingshe 祇洹精舍), inaugurated in 1908 and only in operation for one academic year, was notable in that it included both laypeople and monastics as teachers and students. Yang compiled a primer of Buddhism in 1906 for use in

18 Goldfuss, *Vers un bouddhisme du XXe siècle*, p. 52. On scriptural printing at Jingshan, see Jingshan kezang nianbiao 徑山刻藏年表. In: *Honghua yuekan* 弘化月刊, Oct 25, 1955, reprinted in Huang Xianian 黃夏年 (ed.): *Minguo Fojiao qikan wenxian jicheng bubian* 民國佛教期刊文獻集成補編, 83 vols. Beijing: Zhongguo shudian 2008, vol. 72, p. 316. Hereafter cited as *MFQB*. The Jinling press printed at least 400 titles up to 1949.

19 Goldfuss, *Vers un bouddhisme du XXe siècle*, pp. 68–79. Holmes Welch: *The Buddhist Revival in China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard East Asian Series 1968.

20 See Gregory Adam Scott: Timothy Richard, World Religion, and Reading Christianity in Buddhist Garb. *Social Sciences and Missions* 25 (2012), pp. 53–75.

21 Goldfuss, *Vers un bouddhisme du XXe siècle*, pp. 105-112. Welch, *Buddhist Revival*, pp. 6–8.

the school's classes, the first of an entire genre of Buddhist books for beginners that would be issued in the Republican period.[22]

Before Yang died in 1911, he instructed that the Jinling press should continue as a public enterprise (*gongye* 公業) entrusted to a group of managers rather than becoming the private property of his descendants, who would instead be provided with housing and a stipend until they were able to contribute financially to the enterprise. Directorship of the press was entrusted to three of Yang's students, all Buddhist laymen. Of the three, Ouyang Jian 歐陽漸 (1871–1943) took the leading role in running the press after Yang's death. Ouyang took over as manager of the press in 1918 upon the death of Chen Xi'an 陳樨庵 (18??–1918), who had served as Yang's assistant at the press for thirty years, and the resignation of the other main manager.[23] Over the next few years Ouyang struggled to keep the press on a sound fiscal footing while dealing with Yang's family, with whom he argued over living and stipend arrangements. Perhaps in response to these difficulties, in 1919 he established the Zhina neixue yuan 支那內學院 (Chinese Inner Studies Institute) within the organizational structure of the Jinling press but under his sole control.[24] In spite of these difficulties in securing new leadership, the press' output did not slow following the death of its founder. In the first eight years after Yang's death in 1911 the Jinling Scriptural Press produced 115 titles whose dates of publication are recorded. In contrast, in the final fourteen years of Yang's life from 1898 to 1911, the press produced only 72 titles.[25]

In many fundamental ways Yang's Jinling Scriptural Press operated within the established scope of Chinese Buddhist publishing: it used xylographic printing blocks and never experimented with other print technologies, it produced mainstream Buddhist scriptural texts almost exclusively, and, if resources had allowed, Yang would have produced a new edition of the Buddhist canon. There were, however, already significant innovations being introduced to the presses during Yang's lifetime, including the formal organization of an independent, internally-regulated social and economic body to run the press that was separate from monastic institutions. He also established the press as an independent financial entity, a 'public enterprise' that was distinct from both his family and any monasterial institution, but never sought to generate a profit from his press. Balancing the merit-generating function of Buddhist publishing with the financial and operational procedures of a publisher, however, would become more difficult in the three decades following his death.

22 See Gregory Adam Scott: The Publishing of Buddhist Books for Beginners in Modern China from Yang Wenhui to Master Sheng Yen 中國近代歷史上的佛學入門書籍出版事業 – 從楊文會居士至聖嚴法師而言. *Shengyan yanjiu* 5 (2014), pp. 51–107.

23 Goldfuss, *Vers un bouddhisme du XXe siècle*, p. 213; Welch, *Buddhist Revival*, pp. 17–18, 319 fn28.

24 Eyal Aviv: Differentiating the Pearl From the Fish Eye: Ouyang Jingwu (1871–1943) and the Revival of Scholastic Buddhism (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2008), pp. 58–75.

25 Luo Cheng, *Jinling kejing chu*, pp. 171-200. Goldfuss, *Vers un bouddhisme du XXe siècle*, pp. 154–55.

The Beijing and Tianjin Scriptural Presses, and Scripture Distributors

The first Chinese Buddhist scriptural presses founded in the Republican era (1912–1949) were the Beijing Scriptural Press 北京刻經處 and the Tianjin Scriptural Press 天津刻經處, established by Xu Weiru 徐蔚如 (1878?–1937) in 1918 and 1921 respectively. Xu had contact with a number of Buddhist monastic and lay figures of the early Republic before helping to found these presses. After failing the civil service exams in 1898, Xu found work in Beijing as a low-level government functionary, and later served for a short time as a representative in the Zhejiang provincial government. He was put in contact with the monk Yinguang 印光 (1861–1940), whom he later met in person at Putuoshan 普陀山.[26] When Xu returned to Beijing to work for the Ministry of Finance he met a number of fellow bureaucrats who were then studying and practising Buddhism, and in 1917 Xu was chosen as the head of a scripture recitation society that included Mei Guangxi 梅光羲 (1880–1947), latterly of Yang's Jinling press.[27] That same year a mutual friend brought him a set of letters written by Yinguang, which Xu personally had republished.[28] Publishing and editing publications were core aspects to Xu's Buddhist engagement; in the early years of the Republic he had also helped fund some publications of the Jinling Press, and although he never met Yang Wenhui in person, he considered himself a pupil of the lay publisher.

In 1918 Xu Weiru traveled to Guanzong Temple 觀宗寺 in Ningbo and returned accompanied by the Tiantai 天台 patriarch Dixian 諦閑 (1858–1932).[29] Dixian lectured to the Beijing-based recitation group, accepting many of them as his lay disciples. After Dixian returned to Ningbo, Xu, Mei Guangxi, Jiang Weiqiao, Jiang Weinong 江味農 (1872–1938) and others collaborated to establish the Beijing Scriptural Press, with Xu acting as general manager and responsible for overseeing the proofreading. After Mei was posted to Shandong and Jiang Weiqiao and Jiang Weinong returned to Shanghai, Xu was left alone in charge of the press.[30] In its early years the Beijing press often collaborated with the Jinling Scriptural

26 Yu Lingbo 于凌波: *Zhongguo jinxiandai Fojiao renwu zhi* 中國近現代佛教人物志. Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe 1995, pp. 467-68. Some accounts claim that it was Xu who initially brought Yinguang's manuscripts back to Shanghai to be published in the periodical.

27 Shi Dongchu 釋東初: *Zhongguo Fojiao jindai shi* 中國佛教近代史. 2 Vols. In: *Dongchu laoren quanji* 東初老人全集. Taipei: Dongchu 1974, vol. 2, pp. 699–701; Yu Lingbo 于凌波 (ed.): *Xiandai Fojiao renwu cidian* 現代佛教人物辭典. Sanchong: Foguang 2004, 2, pp.1580–82; Jiang Weiqiao: Xu Weiru jushi zhuan 徐蔚如居士傳. *Foxue banyuekan* 佛學半月刊, October 16, 1938. In: *MFQ* vol. 54, pp. 349–50

28 Xinxi jushi 信西居士: *Yinguang fashi nianpu* 印光法師年譜, entry for 1917.

29 Dixian had previously taught at the Buddhist Normal School for Monastics 佛教師範僧學校 in Nanjing, and in 1919 had established the Guanzong School 觀宗學舍 and the Guanzong Research Society 觀宗研究社 at his temple in Ningbo. Shi Dongchu: *Zhongguo Fojiao jindai shi*, vol. 2, pp. 757–61. Yu Lingbo: *Xiandai Fojiao renwu cidian*, vol. 2, pp. 1621–24.

30 Shi Dongchu: *Zhongguo Fojiao jindai shi*, vol. 2, pp. 730–32; Jiang Weiqiao, Xu Weiru jushi zhuan. Dixian's lectures to the group in Beijing were recorded by Jiang Weiqiao and Huang Youxi 黃幼希 (d.u.), and Xu

Press, sharing staff and reprinting each other's publications. Initially the printing work was handled by a private studio, and as the number of its printing blocks increased they were moved to a storeroom in a private residence.[31] Xu later moved to Tianjin to work as a clerk for the Qixin Cement Company 啟新洋灰公司, and in 1921 he, Zhou Zhifu 周志輔 (d.u.), and Zhou Shujia 周叔迦 (1899–1970) collaborated to found the Tianjin Scriptural Press. The Beijing and Tianjin presses appear to have remained linked together on the management level, and the two are normally discussed together as a pair in primary and scholarly sources.

An accounting report for the fiscal year 1921–1922 gives us an invaluable look into the internal organization and functioning of the Beijing Scriptural Press.[32] Funds remaining from the previous year were just over 4,000 yuan in cash, and income per annum totalled 6,070 yuan, mostly from donations but also from interest on bonds. Expenditures for the previous fiscal year had totalled just over 7,000 yuan, leaving the press with 2,714.37 in cash.[33] The expenditure for each set of blocks carved and each print run is listed as a separate line item in the account. For one example, the *Renwang huguo jing jiaxiang shu* 仁王護國經嘉祥疏, carving cost 260 yuan, while printing was a mere 33.89 yuan. A note at the beginning of the list of outgoing funds states: 'Every expenditure for printing scriptures paid out by this press represents the cost of printing and distributing meritorious (*gongde* 功德) books.'[34] I interpret this to indicate a sense of responsibility on the part of the press to channel its funds solely into the work of religious publishing, rather than toward other commercial possibilities such as profit generation, investments, or capital improvements. A number of people and groups are listed as having donated funds to the press, with many giving money earmarked for the publication of a particular title. The assurance that such donations were being used solely for meritorious acts, rather than enriching the managers or investors in the press, was thus an important one to make. The report lists 84 titles totalling 170 fascicles that had been completed in the previous year, and 30 titles totalling 74 fascicles for which printing blocks had been carved but which were not yet printed.

The detail and precision of the report likely reflects Xu Weiru's background as a government bureaucrat and corporate clerk. Based on its contents we can learn that the Beijing and Tianjin scriptural presses were run as not-for-profit operations, with no funds being distributed to owners or shareholders; income was primarily from donations, and donated sums were earmarked for specific print runs. So far, this model follows closely that established by earlier Buddhist woodblock printers. It did, however, maintain convertible investments and

discusses them at some length in his eulogy for Dixian. See *MFQ* vol. 22, pp. 198–201.

31 Yang Zhifeng 楊之峰: Xu Wenwei yu Beijing kejingchu 徐文霨與北京刻經處. *Tushuguan yanjiu yu gongzuo* 圖書館研究與工作 122 (2010), pp. 69–71; Luo Cheng: *Jinling kejing chu yanjiu*, pp. 259–64.

32 *Beijing kejing chu disan ci zhengxin lu* 北京刻經處第三次徵信錄. Beijing: Beijing Scriptural Press 1922.

33 The currency used is mainly silver dollars (*xianyang yuan* 現洋元), with the exception of some promised donations in Beijing Script (*jingchao* 京鈔), issued by the Beiyang Government. The press also held USD 4,000 in US bonds.

34『凡本處所開支之印經費均係印送功德書之價.』 *Beijing kejing chu disan ci zhengxin lu* , p. 1.

derived a small amount of interest profit from them, and could also transfer capital between branches and between types of investments to maximize productivity or to respond to changes in the operating plan. Finally, simply producing detailed public records such as this was not a hallmark of earlier presses, but rather reflects modern accounting procedures. Thus in this early example we can see the core of the Buddhist merit-generating and economic publishing model being supplemented by some new accounting tools to help strengthen the fiscal health of the organization, and to help it be more flexible in the face of changing circumstances.

Buddhist scriptural presses in China, at least fifteen of which had been founded by the 1920s, were linked together by networks of shared personnel, donors, and textual circulation. This last aspect was facilitated by another new form of Buddhist print institution, the scripture distributor (*Fojing liutong chu/suo* 佛經流通處/所). 'Scripture distributor' was a highly mutable designation; in some cases it could refer to one function of a larger press, temple, or lay association. Yang's estate in Nanjing, for example, was in at least one source referred to as a scripture distributor, and in its broadest sense the label was applied to any publisher, bookstore, or printer that included Buddhist scriptures in its catalogue.[35] One example of this is the series of book lists published by Youzheng Press 有正書局 in early issues of the Buddhist periodical *Foxue congbao* 佛學叢報 (Buddhist Miscellany). By 1914 this catalogue had grown to include about 680 entries from several scriptural publishers, whereas Youzheng's commercial catalogue from the early 1920s, in contrast, lists only sixteen Buddhist titles.[36] From the early 1920s, however, the term came to be used more specifically to designate an institution specializing in the sale and local distribution of xylographic Buddhist texts that had been printed at a scriptural press. Many of these distributors are listed under the name of a particular temple, while others appear as independent, and often also lay-managed, institutions, the largest of which had their own retail and office locations, regulations, and published catalogues. A brief look at two distributors active in the 1920s will show that while they shared the scriptural press' mission of proselytization and the spread of the Buddhist teachings, they appear to have functioned more as a retail and public space than the presses, which show no indication of welcoming ordinary customers to visit in person. While they had embraced many of the procedures of commercial bookstores, however, these early examples held close to the scriptural press' ideals of merit generation without profiteering.

The Beijing Scripture Distributor 北京佛經流通處 first appears in primary sources from 1919, and was based at Wofo Temple 臥佛寺, just west of the Forbidden City in Beijing.[37] From as early as 1923, which is the date of the earliest distributor catalogue of which I am aware, it had a close relationship with the Tianjin Scripture Distributor 天津佛經流通處.

35 *Haichao yin* 海潮音, 8. In: *MFQ* vol. 148, pp. 433.

36 *Youzheng shuju faxing Fojing liutong suo shumu* 有正書局發行佛經流通所書目. In: *MFQ* vol. 4 pp. 549–69; *Youzheng shuju mulu* 有正書局目錄, ([1921?-1923?]), reprinted in Yin Mengxia 殷夢霞 and Li Shasha 李莎莎 (selected and eds): *Zhongguo jindai guji chuban faxing shiliao congkan, xubian* 中國近代古籍出版發行史料叢刊 ·續編. Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe 2008, vol. 8.

37 See *Jueshe congshu* 覺社叢書 (January, 1919). In: *MFQ* vol. 7 pp. 164–65.

A typeset book catalogue from 1923 lists approximately 3,300 titles on offer by the Beijing and Tianjin distributors, the printing of which is credited to a number of scriptural presses, including Jinling, Jiangbei, Beijing, Tianjin, Changzhou, Hangzhou, Yangzhou, and others. This wide range of suppliers is an early example of the highly connected networks of Buddhist print culture that would further develop later in the Republican era.[38] These distributor catalogues also list for sale a variety of Buddhist images printed on different grades of paper and with different types of inks, which were also produced by the scriptural presses. Also listed are photographs of Buddhist sites, religious images of deities, prayer beads, other religious implements such as the wooden fish-shaped drum (*muyu* 木魚) used for liturgies, and many different types and styles of incense.[39]

Crucially, however, unlike earlier catalogues where book prices are absent, this one lists a 'cost of printing' (*yinjia* 印價) for each item that would be charged to the consumer. The Beijing Distributor was thus among the first Chinese Buddhist publishers to flip the traditional economic model of scriptural publishing on its head; instead of the donor providing the funds up front then distributing the texts for free in exchange for religious merit, the press or distributor becomes responsible for the cost of production, which is then recouped through sales at cost. A printer's charter and an advertisement near the end of the catalogue outline the intended purpose and function of the distributor. The charter states that while the purpose of the distributor is to distribute books, it 'is not of a commercial character, and should not be seen as a 'bookstore.'[40] Yet its structure and its day-to-day operations do in fact resemble those of a commercial publisher and bookstore: it had a centralized distribution network with a main distributor, local branches, and local resellers independent of the press; it invested any donations as permanent capital rather than using them as circulating capital; and it actively solicited new products to be reprinted. The advertisement mentions that people are welcome to visit the distributors whether they intend to buy anything or not, and that staff would be on site to greet them during the day. Books could also be ordered, paid for, and delivered by post.[41] These practices are very much in line with business procedures of the time, the one key difference being that this company sought not monetary profit but rather the generation of merit. This balancing act between merit and profit would be further developed by other Buddhist print enterprises later in the 1920s.

38 *Foxue shumu biao* 佛學書目表 (Beijing: Beijing Fojing liutong chu, 1923). In: Wei Li 韋力 (ed.) / Zhilanzhai 芷蘭齋 (collected): *Zhongguo jindai guji chuban faxing shiliao congkan bubian* 中國近代古籍出版發行史料叢刊 · 補編. Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju 2006, 5, pp. 439–564; 6, pp. 1–211.

39 *Foxue shumu biao*, 6, pp. 151–70.

40 *Foxue shumu biao*, 6, pp. 207.

41 *Foxue shumu biao*, 6, pp. 210. The advertisement also lists phonographic records of chanting 念佛留聲機片 for sale. The distributor had a policy of not extending credit to customers, likely a wise rule given the unsettled economic climate of 1920s China.

The Central Scriptural Press

The Central Scriptural Press 中央刻經院 was established in Beijing in the autumn of 1925 and was located in the Ganhua alleyway 感化衚衕 outside Xuanwu Gate 宣武門, to the southwest of the Forbidden City. Its founder was Wan Shuhao 萬叔豪 (fl. 1920s–1936). Wan had initially come to Beijing to work for Xiong Xiling 熊希齡 (1870–1937), a scholar and philanthropist who had briefly served as Premier and Finance Minister under Yuan Shikai before resigning in 1914. While working at Xiong's Ganhua Hall 感化院, a philanthropic school which took in 'juvenile delinquents' from all over China, Wan compiled textbooks for use in their instruction, and started also to print morality books and Buddhist scriptures. In 1925 he established the Central Scriptural Press to continue his work.[42] The press' first catalogue, published in 1926, lists ten great benefits to be gained from having scriptures printed and images made, including the effacement of transgressions, the protection of auspicious spirits, freedom from others seeking revenge on you, and abundant food and clothing in a harmonious household.[43]

According to the origin story printed in the catalogue, the press specialized in printing portable, pocket-sized (*xiuzhen* 袖珍) editions of scriptural texts. The account notes that modern people live busy lives, and unfortunately they cannot carry around copies of Buddhist scriptures and morality books, which are large and heavy. It then recalls that in earlier times, some scholars made manuscript copies of the classics in very small print so that they could have them at hand day and night. Later when xylographic printing was introduced, the standard editions of the classics were quite large so smaller editions were printed as well. These Confucian practices form the model for the press' publication strategy:

> Thus this press made a point of following this example. From among all types of Buddhist scriptures and morality books we selected those that were best suited to be consulted morning and night in daily life. Copying the example of the *Sibu congkan*,[44] we planned on using movable type to print one thousand titles in a pocket-sized edition. Organized by category, we would package them into a small box which was bound in a cloth cover for ease of portability. The entire work was divided into ten print runs, with one hundred titles per run, each called a 'collection' [*ji* 集], to be printed in series. At present, the first collection has been decided, and will be printed at the end of December, 1926. Its means of distribution will be by the book catalogue detailed below. Please take a look. If we can be of any help, it would truly be our pleasure.[45]

42 Zhongyang kejing yuan Wan Jun jushi lai han 中央刻經院萬鈞居士來函. *Guanzong hongfa she kan* 觀宗弘法社刊18 (February, 1931), *MFQ* vol. 144, p. 491.

43 *Zhongyang kejing yuan shumu* 中央刻經院書目 [1926]. In: Liu Hongquan 劉洪權 (ed.): *Minguo shiqi chuban shumu huibian* 民國時期出版書目彙編. Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe 2010, vol. 20, p. 78.

44 Zhang Yuanji 張元濟 (1867–1959) (ed.): *Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊 (Collectaneum of the Four Categories) was a collection of classical texts printed via lithography, first published in 1919 by the Commercial Press.

45 『故本院特師其意．選擇各種佛經及勸善書籍之最切於人生日用宜於朝夕閱覽者．得一千種．仿四部叢刊例．用鉛版排印袖珍本各一千冊．分類裝入小箱中．以期束之巾笥．便

Initially one thousand copies of each title were to be printed, at a total cost of 9,995 yuan. The titles listed in the catalogue that follows include author or translator information, a detailed précis of its content, and two sets of prices: the first quotes expected labour and materials costs per one thousand copies, and the second prices individual copies. In the case of the Diamond Sūtra, for example, the cost of printing a set of one thousand copies is listed as 56 silver yuan, while individual copies would be sold for 6.8 cents each, a 21.5 per cent markup compared to the cost per copy of the set.[46] This system of planning an entire 1000-title, limited-run collection of works, advertising for it in advance, and then selling the works for more than the cost of printing appears unprecedented among scriptural presses, who would normally receive a lump-sum donation to print a given title, then make copies of that work available at or below cost.[47]

The Central Scriptural Press had further plans for their financial backing, appending an outline stock prospectus to their catalogue. The document likens the enterprise of printing and distributing scriptures to 'opening up the Dharma bridge' (*kaitong faqiao* 開通法橋), and calls it an endeavour that brings incalculable merit. Income for the enterprise is generated through a 20 per cent markup on books, although purchases of 100 or more titles would receive a 10 per cent discount, and stock holders would be entitled to a 15 per cent discount. The business model for the press is explained as 'in general conducted according to practices of commercial stores, especially in taking [internal] checks and restraints as our principle.'[48] The press is reported as seeking an initial capitalization of 20,000 yuan divided into ten large shares of 2,000 yuan each, each of which is further divided into ten small shares of 200 yuan; anyone holding one small share or more would be recognized as a stockholder. One half of the stock would be formally underwritten, the other issued in smaller 50 yuan certificates and personally guaranteed by a generous donor. The authors foresaw that once all the shares were sold the press could move out of their temporary location, establish retail branches in temples to help with distribution, and reorganize themselves as a limited liability company to ensure its permanence.[49] Additionally, they planned on using some donations to hire twenty to thirty destitute orphans, teaching them literacy and mathematics for six months, after which they would be dispatched to ferry ports and train stations to sell the company's products. While

於携帶．全書分十次刷印．每次一百種．名為一集．絡續付印．茲第一集選印之書．已行决定．期於十五年十二月底印成．其流通辦法暨印書目錄．另詳於後．請賜 覽觀．如蒙加以扶助．實為至幸．』Punctuation as in original. *Zhongyang kejing yuan shumu*, pp. 81–82.

46 *Zhongyang kejing yuan shumu*, pp. 82, 84. At the end of the catalogue is a small list of works offered for sale on consignment (*daishou* 代售) on behalf of other printers, including a number of pocket-sized scriptures, Buddhist images, and one work by Taixu. *Zhongyang kejing yuan shumu*, pp. 103–4. On p. 113, the back cover of the catalogue, the other printers for whom the press distributed scriptures are listed as 北京天津長沙南京蘇州杭州成都磚橋等處.

47 See, for example, the accounts of the Beijing Scriptural Press above.

48『概照商店慣例辦理．專以核實撙節為主.』 *Zhongyang kejing yuan shumu*, pp. 105–7.

49 *Zhongyang kejing yuan shumu*, pp. 107–12.

this would have likely improved the lives of the children involved, it exemplifies the hybrid philanthropic-commercial tone adopted by distributor's directors, where even a humanitarian plan is ultimately intended to support their bottom line.

In its 1926 report, the press lists debts of 5,200 yuan, and income from printing of 27,197.65 yuan, of which over 15,000 yuan came from donations, with 432,000 copies of their own titles printed that year. The press is listed as owning its own printing capital, such as steel, zinc, paper, wood, and cast type printing blocks. At the end of that year, the press owed nearly as much as it had in assets.[50] For 1927, they had earned 8,200 yuan from sales of stock, and had borrowed another 8,000 yuan. Print income was 24,632.55 yuan, with 381,000 copies of 74 different titles printed, and again the press owed outstanding loans in an amount equal to their assets. A two-page catalogue that follows lists titles in the first and second collections of the planned 1000-title print run, but prices are only given per single copy.[51] A short advertisement from 1928 reports that they had already printed and distributed over 1,400,000 copies of over 170 titles across China, and a Buddhist association in Taiwan reported receiving 21 books and 30 printed images from the press that year.[52]

Adopting the structure and practices of commercial publishers was intended to help the Central Scriptural Press to fulfil its mission of spreading the Dharma, and given the numbers of books they were able to distribute it would appear to have been a factor in their success. We might contrast their expressly business-oriented approach with that of the Beijing Gengshen Scripture Distributor 北京庚申佛經流通處, founded in 1920. In 1934 the Gengshen distributor produced the largest catalogue of Buddhist scriptural texts I have yet seen, running to 216 pages and listing approximately 3,120 entries. The catalogue also lists a wide range of religious implements for sale, such as drums, bells, wall hangings, and incense.[53] The directors of the Gengshen distributor, however, saw their enterprise in an entirely different light to that of the Central Scriptural Press: they describe it as 'absolutely not of a business character,' and that they 'do not extend credit, discount or deduct [prices].'[54] In this case, a Buddhist publisher was adamant in distancing their work from that of commercial presses, and yet they were evidently successful in distributing a massive catalogue of printed Buddhist works.

50 *Foguang she shekan* 佛光社社刊, 3. In: *MFQ* vol. 16 pp. 478–80.

51 *Foguang she shekan*, pp. 480–86.

52 *Xizai zhuankan* 息災專刊, 4 (May 24, 1928). In: *MFQ* vol. 134 p. 59; *Nanying Fojiao* [*Nan'ei Bukkyō*] 南瀛佛教, August 21, 1928. In: *MFQ*, vol. 109 p. 322. Another press advertisement from 1927 is in *Chenzhong tekan* 晨鐘特刊, year 1 no. 2 (February 1927). In: *MFQB* vol. 32, p. 306.

53 *Foxue shumu* 佛學書目 (Beiping: Gengshen Fojing liutong chu, Jan. 1934). In: Yin Mengxia 殷夢霞 and Li Shasha 李莎莎 (selected and eds): *Zhongguo jindai guji chuban faxing shiliao congkan xubian* 中國近代古籍出版發行史料叢刊 · 續編. Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe 2008, vol. 10, pp. 191–410.

54 *Foxue shumu* (1934), p. 192.

Concluding Thoughts

This brief survey of Chinese Buddhist scriptural presses and distributors has only been able to outline some of the highlights of how their enterprises were understood and operated. Two themes, however, stand out: first, that the managers and directors of Buddhist scriptural enterprises were often from a bureaucratic or business background, so commercial procedures would have likely been familiar to them, but they applied them to their religious publishing work with some unease, taking pains to explain their use of them in their advertisements, charters, and other publicity materials; and second, that the profit-driven motives of business were not always easy to reconcile with the merit economy of Buddhism. The problem with being seen as operating too much like a commercial business was that it interfered with peoples' motivations for supporting Buddhist publishing: if the directors and investors were in the business of Buddhist publishing for personal gain, it would poison the well for gaining additional donation support in exchange for merit. Buddhist publishers who wished to use modern business practices thus had to carefully balance the different elements of their work so that this connection to the merit economy would not be severed.[55]

I understand these kinds of developments in Chinese Buddhist print culture in part as one indication that the new features of Chinese Buddhism during this period cannot be understood as part of a false dichotomy of 'tradition' and 'modernity.' The core of Buddhist publishing remained the production and distribution of texts for merit and for spreading the Buddhist teachings, and this core was not jettisoned even by the most 'modern' of Buddhist publishing enterprises. What happened instead was a selective integration of modern technologies into longstanding procedures of textual production and merit generation, a grafting of new onto old. This helped to produce an era of exceptionally productive publishing, even while it held within it a number of internal and unresolved contradictions.

55 We can see this most clearly in the case of the Shanghai Buddhist Books Company, one of the most successful Buddhist publishers of the early twentieth century. See Shi Ruige 史瑞戈 [Gregory Adam Scott]: Pingheng gongde yu liyi—Shanghai foxue shuju gufen youxian gongsi de jingli 平衡功德與利益— 上海佛學書局股份有限公司的經歷. In: Kang Bao 康豹 [Paul R. Katz]/Gao Wanseng 高萬桑 [Vincent Goossaert](eds): *Gaibian Zhongguo zongjiao de wushi nian, 1898-1948* 改變中國宗教的五十年，1898–1948. Taipei: Academia Sinica 2015, pp. 193–223.

4
Women in All Lands and the Hierarchies of 'Global' Knowledge in Chinese Print Culture at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

Yun Zhu

Between 1903 and 1905, the Shanghai-based Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge among the Chinese (*Guangxuehui* 廣學會) and the Methodist Publishing House (*Huamei shuju* 華美書局) published a 21-volume collection titled *Quandi wudazhou nüsu tongkao* 全地五大洲女俗通考, whose English title and subtitle read *Women in All Lands, or China's Place among the Nations: A Philosophic Study of Comparative Civilizations, Ancient and Modern*).[1] Compiled and translated by the American missionary Young John Allen (1836–1907, known as Lin Lezhi 林樂知 to his Chinese readers) with the help of his Chinese assistant Yin Pao-Lu 任保羅 (also known as Ren Baoluo or Ren Ting-xu 任廷旭, birth and death years unknown), the collection introduces and compares the status and treatment of women in different countries of the world, arguing that women's social status is a significant criterion in the evaluation of a nation's level of civilization and that China should liberate and educate its women, especially through conversion to Christianity, to survive global competition. In a time when strengthening China by learning from the West was a dominant theme in the intellectual discourse and with quite a few of its chapters published as articles in the influential Christian newspaper *A Review of the Times* (*Wanguo gongbao* 萬國公報, 1874–1883 and 1889–1907), which was established, edited, and run by Allen himself, *Women in All Lands* gained immediate popularity and notably added to the on-going discussions about the reformation of Chinese women in a newly envisioned global context. Examining this Chinese-language text about Western knowledge first-authored by a foreign missionary and targeted at a mass Chinese audience beyond the nation's Christian population, this study argues that its uneven mediation between the national and the global, especially by way of women's issues, reveals a series of important and entwined changes in the transforming book and print culture of the late Qing period.

1 All quotations from *Women in All Lands* cited in this chapter have been accessed through the Digital Collections website of the National Library of Australia (http://www.nla.gov.au/apps/cdview/?pi=nla.gen-vn354886) (15 April 2016).

Zhuan, Yi, and Shu: The Nuances of Translatorship, (Trans)National Subjectivity, and Cultural Agency

One of the most noticeable intellectual and cultural phenomena in the last two decades of Qing rule was the flourishing of translation activities. Such seminal works as Yan Fu's 嚴復 (1854–1921) translation of Thomas Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* (the Chinese title being *Tian yan lun* 天演論, 1897–1898) and Lin Shu's 林紓 (1852–1924) extremely popular rendering of *La Dame aux camélias* by Alexandre Dumas, fils (the Chinese title being *Bali chahuanü yishi* 巴黎茶花女遺事, 1899) not only drew many Chinese readers to the topics of Western learning and national reform but also led to what Michael Gibbs Hill has described as a 'movement of translation to the center of the constellation of activities that made up the mental labor of educated elites.'[2]

Because of the lack of bilingual professionals at the time, many translation activities involved collaborations between foreigners and Chinese nationals, following the example of Matteo Ricci (Chinese name Li Madou 利瑪竇, 1552–1610) and Xu Guangqi 徐光啟 (1562–1633) when they translated Euclid's *Elements* (the Chinese title being *Jihe yuanben* 幾何原本) in 1606 and 1607. Such cooperation, while often proving quite effective and efficient, also added to the complex confluences and negotiations of agency between the translators, especially when the translation, as in the case of *Women in All Lands*, focused more on the introduction and importation of foreign knowledge than on the exact equivalence between the source and the target texts. With the production of such translated works encompassing a range of activities involving selection, adaptation, writing, and rewriting, the definitional boundary between translatorship and authorship became rather blurred.

Young John Allen, the editor of the collection, was sent to China by the American Southern Methodist Episcopal Mission. A prolific writer, translator, and publisher, he actively introduced Western knowledge to a growing and transforming Chinese readership and exerted a strong influence among those seeking for ways to reform and re-strengthen China. In an interview in the Hong Kong-based English newspaper *China Mail* during the short-lived 1898 Reform, Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927), one of the two most important reformist leaders, told the reporter that Allen's writings and translations were a major source of inspiration for him.[3] Both the impressively vast assemblage of Western-originating materials in *Women in All Lands*, which Allen identified as his 'magnum opus'[4], and its obvious religious mission suggest Allen's primary role in the compilation and production process. While the collection does not often reveal its reference sources, which practice was not uncommon among translated

2 Michael Gibbs Hill: *Lin Shu, Inc. Translation and the Making of Modern Chinese Culture*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press 2013, p. 8.

3 Yao Songling 姚崧齡: *Yingxiang woguo weixin de jige waiguoren* 影響我國維新的幾個外國人. Taipei: Zhuanji wenxue chubanshe 1971, p. 57.

4 Adrian A. Bennett: *Missionary Journalist in China. Young J. Allen and His Magazines, 1860–1883*. Athens: University of Georgia Press 1983, p. 237.

works at the time[5], two findings in Adrian A. Bennett's 1983 book *Missionary Journalist in China, Young J. Allen and His Magazines, 1860–1883* indicate that Western encyclopaedias, biographies, memoirs, and history books must have served as important sources of information. Firstly, when Allen worked for the Jiangnan Arsenal (*Jiangnan zhizaoju* 江南製造局)[6], many of his translations 'were based on articles in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*'; secondly, among the books Allen brought to China from the United States were a number of such items.[7] Overall, the voluminous collection mixes its Christian messages with a wide coverage of, as summarized on the English title page, 'Geography, History, Manners, Customs, Laws, Institutions, Religions, Superstitions, &c., &c., of many nations; with a general estimate of the relative status and grade of each.'[8]

Yin Pao-Lu, Allen's collaborator, on the other hand, was much less prominent than the American editor. As we learn from Allen's preface, Yin was initially a Confucian scholar-official. After being sent abroad by the Qing government to Japan and the United States, he became a Christian and worked with Allen to introduce Western knowledge to Chinese readers. On the informative English title page of *Women in All Lands* in Volume 1, which follows the Chinese title page and table of contents, Yin's secondarily important role in the collection is clearly stated, with the entire work introduced as having been compiled 'by Rev. Young J. Allen, M.A., D.D., LL.D. assisted by Yin Pao-Lu, B.A.'

Yet where the editorship, authorship, and translatorship of *Women in All Lands* are mentioned in Chinese, whether within the collection or in its excerpts in *A Review of the Times*, the nature of Allen and Yin's collaboration is defined more subtly. Starting from the second volume, the tables of contents introduce Allen's work as 'compilation and translation' (*jiyi* 輯譯) and Yin's as 'translation and transmission' (*yishu* 譯述). While such descriptions are generally applied to the entire collection, they are probably most accurate concerning those contents originally cited from English-language sources, for example, a section titled 'On the Status of Korean Women' (*Lun Gaoli funü diwei* 論高麗婦女地位) in Chapter 3 of Volume 3 (or the first volume of Part 2)[9] and Chapter 16 of Volume 14, 'On the Effects of Women's Elevation in Western Countries' (*Lun Xiguo zhenxing nüren zhi chengxiao* 論西國振興女人之成效). The former is credited to an American teacher whose last name

5 Often involving much adaptation and domestication and sometimes accessing the original texts through translations in a third language, many translated works in late Qing China provided little information about the exact publication details of their source texts.

6 For a list of the translated works published by the Jiangnan Arsenal, see Xiong Yuezhi 熊月之: *Xixue dongjian yu wan qing shehui* 西學東漸與晚清社會. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe 1994, pp. 538–50.

7 Adrian A. Bennett: *Missionary Journalist in China*, p. 73 and pp. 289-92. See also Lu Mingyu 盧明玉: *Yi yu yi — Lin Lezhi yishu yu xixue chuanbo* 譯與異——林樂知譯述與西學傳播. Beijing: Shoudu jingji maoyi daxue chubanshe 2010.

8 Young J. Allen: *Quandi wudazhou nüsu tongkao* 全地五大洲女俗通考. Shanghai: SDK 1904, Vol. 1, English title page.

9 Each 'part'(*ji* 集) of the collection usually contains two to three 'volumes' (*juan* 卷).

was Sinicized as Qiongsi 瓊思, and the latter to an American lady with the Sinicized name Mei'erwen 美而文.[10] When the first piece appeared in the February 1901 issue of *A Review of the Times*, Allen's role was described as 'interpreting the meaning' (*yiyi* 譯意), and Yin's as 'transmitting the speech' (*shuyan* 述言).[11] Similarly, when the second piece was published in the November 1904 issue of the journal, Allen was defined as the 'interpreter' (*yi* 譯) and Yin as the 'transmitter' (*shu* 述).[12] However, in the case of Chapter 3 of Volume 19, 'Religion Is Essentially Important for the U.S. Nation' (*Meiguo liguo yi jiaodao wei ben* 美國立國以教道為本), whose authorship was credited to an American missionary with the Sinicized name Gailehui 蓋勒惠in the December 1904 issue of *A Review of the Times*[13], there is no mention of its original source in the collection.

Though usually not particularly stated in the collection, some parts were claimed to have been written by Allen when they appeared in *A Review of the Times*, as in the cases of 'A Summary of the 19th Century' (*Zonglun shijiu zhou* 總論十九周), 'The Differences and Relations between Men and Women' (*Lun nannü zhi fenbie ji qi guanxi* 男女之分別及其關係), and 'Women's Customs as a Measuring Criterion for Civilization' (*Nüsu wei jiaohua zhi biaozhun* 女俗為教化之標準), with Allen's work defined as authorship (*zhuan* 撰 or *zhu* 著) and Yin's as translation or transmission.[14] Though still embracing some segments authored by Allen[15], the last two volumes on China, on the other hand, include sections contributed by Chinese authors, such as Fan Yi's 範禕 'Mistreatment of Women' (*Bodai funü* 薄待婦女) and Shen Zhuiweng's 沈贅翁 (also known as Shen Yugui 沈毓桂) 'On Women's Education in Ancient China' (*Lun Zhongguo gushi nüjiao* 論中國古時女教) in Chapter 7. Both Fan and Shen worked with Allen for *A Review of the Times*. Throughout the collection, notes and commentaries credited to Yin occur sporadically.

When contextualized both against the indigenous traditions and against the imbalanced relationship between China and the Western powers in the late Qing dynasty, the nuances among 'authorship,' 'transmission,' and 'translation' reveal an important aspect of the transformational Chinese book culture. In the long-dominant Confucian tradition, passing on canonical knowledge was usually prioritized over original creation. Such a principle can be traced back to Confucius' (551–479 BC) self-description as a person devoted to 'transmission,'

10 Allen, *Women in All Lands*, Vol. 3, p. 48 and Vol. 14, p. 67.

11 Lin Lezhi 林樂知/Yin Pao-Lu 任保羅: Lun Gaoli funü diwei 論高麗婦女地位. *Wanguo gongbao* 萬國公報 145 (February 1901), p. 4.

12 Lin Lezhi 林樂知/Yin Pao-Lu 任保羅: Lun Xiguo zhenxing nüren zhi chengxiao 論西國振興女人之成效. *Wanguo gongbao* 萬國公報 190 (November 1904), p. 6.

13 Gailehui 蓋勒惠/Lin Lezhi 林樂知/Yin Pao-Lu 任保羅: Lun Meiguo liguo yi jiaodao wei ben 論美國立國以教道為本. *Wanguo gongbao* 萬國公報 191 (December 1904), p. 8.

14 Respectively Chapter 13 of Volume 14, the main body of Chapter 15 of Volume 14, and Chapter 1 of Volume 21 in the collection, these parts were published under slightly revised titles in the June 1902, July 1902, and May 1903 issues of *A Review of the Times*.

15 The authorship of Chapter 14, 'Academics' (*Xueshu* 學術), for example, was credited to Allen in *A Review of the Times* in January, 1905.

rather than 'innovative authorship,' in *Lun yu* 論語 (The analects), where the master further ties his preferred form of cultural agency to a faith in, and love of, 'old traditions'.[16] Under such a paradigm, as Hill has pointed out, 'activities such as compilation, editing, and commentary commonly lie at the core of intellectual work.'[17] With the Qing government's repeated defeats by modern Western nations and by its Westernized neighbour Japan since the First Opium War (1839–1842), however, the connotations of not only 'transmission' and 'innovative authorship' but also 'old traditions' had been substantively reconstructed. For many Chinese elites yearning for breakthrough methods to enable the nation to survive, the canonical Confucian learning was no longer sufficient and had to be complemented by Western knowledge. Hence the great popularity of Wei Yuan's 魏源 (1794–1857) influential slogan 'Emulating [as a student does his teacher] the strength of foreigners' technology in order to overcome them' (*Shi yi changji yi zhi yi* 師夷長技以製夷) proposed in *Haiguo tuzhi* 海國圖誌 (Illustrated treatise on the maritime countries, 1843–1852).[18] In this teacher-student metaphor, Western learning challenges the old Confucian traditions and elevates the importance of translatorship in a new vein of cultural 'transmission', indicating that it can be as powerful an intervention as 'authorship' itself.

In his preface, the title of which in Chinese is 'Lin's Preface' (*Lin xu* 林序), Allen directly addresses the tensions between old Chinese practices and new Western knowledge[19] by emphasizing the difference between his approach and that of traditional Chinese historical writings represented by Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (ca. 145–90 BCE) *Shiji* 史記 (The records of the historian). That is, instead of providing a historical review of the rises and falls of countries and states, his work encourages a synchronic and transnational approach that 'takes the present as a mirror' in order to discover a universal rule about the evolution of civilizations.[20] On a more personal level, Allen explains, he has been motivated to compile this collection by 'serious worries about sinking together in the same boat', a feeling he shares with many Chinese nationals after 'residing in China' for years and forgetting his role as a 'guest.'[21] The purpose of this work, claims Allen, is to help Chinese readers acquire a modern global vision of the world which will help them change the unenlightened conditions of their nation. With an emphasis on the intervening agency of the foreign missionary, Allen refers to his own

16 Yang Bojun 楊伯峻: *Lunyu yizhu* 論語譯註. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 1992, p. 66.

17 Hill, *Lin Shu, Inc*., p. 15.

18 Lydia H. Liu: *The Clash of Empires. The Invention of China in Modern World Making*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2004, p. 95.

19 Such conflicts led to several waves of debate over the 'rites controversy' (*liyi zhi zheng* 禮儀之爭) from the seventeenth century through the late 1930s. See Li Tiangang 李天綱: *Zhongguo liyi zhi zheng. Lishi, wenxian he yiyi* 中國禮儀之爭：歷史，文獻和意義. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 1998.

20 Allen, *Women in All Lands*, Vol. 1, Lin's Preface, pp. 1-2.

21 *Ibid*., Vol. 1, Lin's Preface,p. 1. On the other hand, interestingly, Allen often emphasized his non-Chinese identity when giving lectures to Western audiences. See Lu Mingyu 盧明玉: *Cong Quandi wudazhou nüsu tongkao xu ba kan huaren, xishi guandian de yitong* 從《全地五大洲女俗通考》序跋看華人、西士觀點的異同. *Hebei xuekan* 32:3 (2012), pp. 157–61.

work as 'no less than an original creation', while crediting Yin mostly for his 'assistance to the translation' (*zhuyi* 助譯), handwriting the whole collection, 'translation and transmission', and making this collection more easily accessible.[22]

This self-perceived centrality of a Western missionary working as the main agent in the translation and transmission of knowledge with the assistance of his Chinese staff, however, seems to be destabilized in the other two prefaces at the beginning of the first volume, respectively written by Gong Xinming 龔心銘—an influential Anhui-born scholar-official who studied with Allen and whose calligraphic writing of the collection's title occurs on all the front covers of the volumes—and Yin. While referring to Allen as a foreign enlightener and to the collection as a textual intervention into China's national crisis, Gong and Yin employ Sinicized terms and emphasize indigenous agency.

For Gong, who considers Allen a 'well-known American scholar' (*Meizhou mingru* 美洲名儒)[23], the collection can guide Chinese people to recognize the importance of women's learning, which 'serves as a foundation for the strengthening of a nation.'[24] Unlike Allen's emphasis on his forty-year residence in China as a proof of his long-time commitment to 'guiding Chinese people to the proper way'[25], Gong honours him as a 'guest resident in China', who should apparently be differentiated from an authentic Chinese subject. This particular stress on Allen's role as a 'guest' 'invoke[s] the authority'[26] of the foreignness of the text but undermines the centrality of the foreign cultural agent.

Yin, in another approach, begins his preface by recognizing Allen as his 'teacher'—echoing Wei Yuan's suggestion—and an 'American *jinshi*' (*Meiguo jinshi* 美國進士).[27] Though acknowledging Allen's primary role in the project and describing his own work as 'sporadic expressions of [his] own views,' Yin exalts not a West-East hierarchy but, instead, a 'comparison that can be instigated from a Chinese perspective.'[28] Moreover, in contrast to Allen's comment on the outdatedness of Sima Qian's historical approach, Yin refers to a quote from the Confucian classic *Liji* 禮記 (The book of rites), 'Study, and then one realizes that his knowledge is insufficient' (*xue ranhou zhi buzu* 學然後知不足), to highlight the collection's purpose and significance as centring on comparison, learning, and progress.[29] While what

22 Allen, *Women in All Lands*, Vol. 1, Lin's Preface, pp. 1 and 3.

23 The character *ru* in *mingru* traditionally refers to a 'Confucian scholar,' but it is hard to determine any specific Confucian connotation here in Gong's preface, as it was quite common for learned foreign scholars and missionaries to be addressed as *ru* in late imperial China.

24 Allen, *Women in All Lands*, Vol. 1, Gong's Preface, p. 1.

25 *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, Lin's Preface, p. 1.

26 André Lefevere: Introduction. In: André Lefevere (ed.): *Translation/History/Culture. A Sourcebook*. New York: Routledge 1992, p. 2.

27 Allen, *Women in All Lands*, Vol. 1, Yin's Preface, p. 1. In China's imperial examination system, a *jinshi* was a highly accomplished scholar who had passed the triennial court examination.

28 *Ibid*.

29 *Ibid*. For the original text, see Yang Tianyu 楊天宇: *Liji yizhu* 禮記譯註. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2004, Vol. 2, p. 457.

follows the original quotation is a discussion on the mutual enhancement between teaching and learning, Yin shifts the focus onto the comparative appraisals in the process of learning and argues that *Women in All Lands* introduces knowledge about the status of foreign women to its Chinese readers so that the latter, like the Confucian student, can realize and overcome their own weaknesses.

At the end of his preface, Yin reflects upon his two-decades-long 'translation and transmission' of foreign books and, in the meantime, expresses his gratitude to the 'Western scholars'(*zhu Xi ru* 诸西儒) of the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge among the Chinese.[30] This bifurcation between the (trans)national subjectivity and cultural agency respectively exercised by foreign and Chinese scholars seems especially interesting, given Yin's quotation of the famous saying 'Only he who knows not only himself but also his Other can win one hundred victories without defeat' (*zhi ji zhi bi, bai zhan bu dai* 知己知彼, 百戰不殆) from the ancient Chinese military treatise *Sunzi bingfa* 孫子兵法 (The art of war) by Sun Wu 孫武 (aka. Sun Tzu, birth and death years unknown, active from the late 6th to early 5th centuries BCE).[31] For the Chinese translator and transmitter, the boundary between the 'self' and the 'Other' is as fluid as the definition of 'translation' is in this context.

From these three prefaces, we may notice the differences among Allen's didactic agenda and religious mission, Gong's emphasis on indigenous cultural roots and promotion of China's ongoing self-strengthening project, and Yin's mediation and integration of the two. In his historicized re-examination of the dissemination of Western knowledge in seventeenth-century China by Jesuit missionaries and their Chinese collaborators, Roger Hart has called to our attention the often implicit but substantial agency of the indigenous literati-officials, who, as 'historical actors', re-imagined the translated texts to suit their own cultural views and appropriated them for their political needs.[32] The nuances concerning the translatorship of *Women in All Lands* show how 'translation of meaning-value from language to language and culture to culture'[33] in the late Qing period led authorship and translatorship — as much as 'resident' and 'guest', 'teacher' and 'student', and 'self' and 'Other' — to become a paired metaphor negotiating (trans)national subjectivity and cultural agency in an unbalanced global context. As the following discussion will show, such dynamic contestations, negotiations, and hybridizations also had a prominent impact on a modern, national Chinese readership in the process of formation.

30 *Ibid*.

31 *Ibid*. For the original context, see Sun Wu 孫武/Guo Huaruo 郭化若: *Sunzi yizhu* 孫子譯注. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 1984, p. 109.

32 Roger Hart: *Imagined Civilizations. China, the West, and Their First Encounter*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 2013, p. 2.

33 Lydia H. Liu: Introduction. In: Lydia H. Liu (ed.): *Tokens of Exchange. The Problem of Translation in Global Circulations*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press 1999, p. 2.

The Gendered Layers of *Shifang*: The Central Relevance of Women's Issues to a Modern Chinese Readership

As its title suggests, 'women' serves as a breakthrough point for the collection's entire project: a religious and social-cultural enlightenment. This is also highlighted in Allen's dedication of the work, written in English, to his wife, Mary Houston Allen, who is described as 'a sympathetic companion and counselor in all [his] missionary thought and labor, particularly in behalf of the women of China.'[34] In his preface, Allen further elaborates on his methodological approach. That is, in a global view that considers the state as 'the most essential unit of the world' and the family as 'the most essential unit of the state', the conditions of women, who play important roles in the family, are 'significantly relevant to human civilizations all over the world.'[35] Because of this comprehensive relevance, the collection includes much content concerning the 'current situation' (*shiju* 時局) in Europe and the United States, especially their modern political systems and national strengths, considering them as the 'results of elevating women's status and promoting women's learning.'[36] On the English title page of Volume 1, the collection summarizes its proposed solution to both Chinese women's problems and the nation's overall crises in three key notions: 'emancipation' (*shifang* 釋放), 'education' (*jiaoyang* 教養) and 'uplift' (*tiba* 提拔).

Such a gendered thematic emphasis is a special feature of the collection that distinguishes it from the more general approach of previous representative missionary publications that attempted to introduce foreign societies and cultures to Chinese readers, such as *Xifang dawen* 西方答問 (Answers to questions about the West, 1637) by Giulio Aleni (Ai Lüeru 艾略儒, 1582–1649) and his indigenous collaborators, and William Muirhead's (Mu Weilian 慕維廉, 1822–1900) and Jiang Jianren's 蔣劍人 (1808–1867) *Dili quanzhi* 地理全志 (A comprehensive gazetteer of geography, 1853). To some extent, the diversified layers of this 'emancipation' and enlightenment project, which range from Christian to humanitarian to Chinese nationalist-reformist to feminist concerns, correspond with Allen's multifaceted cultural and educational engagements in Shanghai, including teaching at the Qing court-sponsored School of Foreign Languages (*Guang fangyan guan* 廣方言館), writing, translating, and publishing both for the Jiangnan Arsenal and for the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge among the Chinese, and founding the Anglo-Chinese College (*Zhongxi shuyuan* 中西書院) and the McTyeire School for Girls (*Zhongxi nüshu* 中西女塾). All in all, Allen's versatile career reflected what Christopher A. Reed has described as the 'continuum from material to intellectual culture, from printers to publishers, and from publishing companies

34 Allen, *Women in All Lands*, Vol. 1, dedication page.
35 *Ibid*., Vol. 1, Lin's Preface, p. 1.
36 *Ibid*., Vol. 1, Introductory Remarks, p. 1.

to government patrons and reading audiences'[37], which exerted a strong impact upon Allen and Yin's gendered perception of their implied readership.

Although the collection was not essentially aimed at making a profit, practical concerns about its reception and circulation obviously informed the domestication and adaptation tactics employed during the translation and compilation process, as can be found in Allen's praise for Yin's deliberate choice of a simple language so that 'even women and children, as long as they can recognize Chinese characters, will be able to read it.'[38] Echoing the then emerging 'new goal of mass-producing books for sale'[39], the linguistic accessibility of *Women in All Lands* and its inclusion of female readers expanded book culture beyond its traditionally limited sphere of educated (and mostly male) elites and, in this way, contributed to an 'emancipation' of potential female readers. This stance resonated with the advocacy of the leading Chinese reformist figure Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929) for popular fiction accessible to non-elite masses as a significant means to foster social and political reform.[40]

Even though there are no accurate figures for either changes in female literacy rates during that era or the male and female readerships of *Women in All Lands*, some relevant studies provide useful insights on these topics. In her examination of the sequels written between the late eighteenth century and the late nineteenth century to Cao Xueqin's 曹雪芹 (ca. 1715–ca. 1763) classic novel *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 (Dream of the red chamber), Ellen Widmer has pointed out that 'a developing female readership' already existed in the nineteenth century, when some writers of fiction, both males and females, started to indicate their awareness of it either 'in prefaces or within the story proper.'[41] This visible female readership, which Evelyn Sakakida Rawski has estimated to be between two and ten per cent[42], significantly increased at the turn of the twentieth century, owing to the collective efforts of foreign missionaries, the Qing government, and local elites to promote women's education. However, as Barbara

37 Christopher A. Reed: *Gutenberg in Shanghai. Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876–1937*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press 2004, p. 4.

38 Allen, *Women in All Lands*, Vol. 1, Lin's Preface, p. 3.

39 Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai*, p. 162.

40 See Yi yin zhengzhi xiaoshuo xu 譯印政治小說序 (Preface to the translation and publication of political fiction) and Lun xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi 論小說與群治之關係 (On the relationship between fiction and the government of the people) in Liang Qichao 梁啟超: *Liang Qichao quanji* 梁啟超全集. Beijing: Beijing chubanshe 1999, pp. 172 and 884–86.

41 Ellen Widmer: Honglou meng Sequels and Their Female Readers in Nineteenth-Century China. In: Martin W. Huang (ed.): *Snakes' Legs. Sequels, Continuations, Rewritings, and Chinese Fiction*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press 2004, p. 127.

42 Evelyn Sakakida Rawski: *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch'ing China*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1979, p. 140. Rawski also estimates the male literacy rate at the time to be 30 to 45 per cent. W. L. Idema, on the other hand, has suggested a 20 to 25 per cent literacy rate for men. W. L. Idema: Review of Evelyn Sakakida Rawski: Education and Popular Literacy in Ch'ing China. *T'oung Pao*, 66:4/5 (1980), p. 322. See also Cynthia J. Brokaw: On the History of the Book in China. In: Cynthia J. Brokaw, Kai-Wing Chow (eds): *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*. Berkeley: University of California Press 2005, pp. 30–31.

Mittler has pointed out, there still remained 'an important discrepancy between this ideal of the implied reader and her later realization.'[43]

Until the early Republican years, print products targeted at women could rarely depend on their sales but, instead, were usually 'financed largely by the founding editors and their generous friends.'[44] Nevertheless, the linguistic choice of an easily accessible vernacular language, just as Amy Dooling has pointed out in the case of the late Qing feminist press, helped to 'foster the development of a national language, a common language which would, among other things, serve as a unifying force' among Chinese women.[45] With the often circuitous mode of distribution of books among female readers, that is, by way of their male relatives and mentors, such a 'unifying force' extended to many male readers as well.

Thematically speaking, women's issues were one of the most attractive topics in the late Qing period for books and other print products aimed at the mass market, where the 'emancipation' of women was widely considered by various groups of writers, readers, and publishers as an effective leverage point to bring changes to China. For foreign missionaries and Chinese converts, women were a major target for the dissemination of Christianity. For many Chinese elites whose intellectual energies had been re-directed by the Qing court's series of failures and the fading away of the imperial civil service examinations[46], the education and transformation of women into a productive work force made up a significant part of the reformist project they enthusiastically promoted. Where these Christian, nationalist, reformist, and feminist senses of 'emancipation' mingled with one another, albeit not without contestations, a proposed transformation of gendered 'unenlightened masses,' or *yongzhong* 庸众[47], as Allen and Yin frequently mentioned both in *Women in All Lands* and their other articles in *A Review of the Times*, became a central issue.

When the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge among the Chinese, the largest Protestant missionary publisher in China at the time, was launched in 1887 by the Scottish Presbyterian missionary Alexander Williamson (Wei Lianchen 韋廉臣, 1829–1890) with the Chinese name of *Tongwen shuhui* 同文書會 (the Tongwen Book

43 Barbara Mittler: *A Newspaper for China? Power, Identity, and Change in Shanghai's News Media, 1872–1912*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2004, p. 253.

44 Amy D. Dooling: *Women's Literary Feminism in Twentieth Century China*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2005, p. 46.

45 *Ibid*.

46 The examinations were finally abolished in 1905.

47 While the Chinese term *yongzhong* occurred in pre-modern classical works such as the third-century BCE *Xunzi* 荀子, it became especially popular in the New Culture Movement from the mid-1910s into the 1920s, when the Movement's leading figure Lu Xun 魯迅 employed the term to criticize the backward Chinese national character. For uses of the term in *Xunzi*, see Jue Zhang 張覺: *Xunzi yizhu* 荀子譯註. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 1996, pp. 17 and 19. For more about the influence of foreign missionaries' depictions of China on Lu Xun's writings, see Lydia H. Liu: *Translingual Practice. Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity — China, 1900–1937*. Stanford: Stanford University Press 1995, pp. 45–76.

Society)[48], Williamson summarized two purposes in his prospectus: firstly, to 'provide relatively high-grade books for the elitist class'; and secondly, to 'provide books with coloured illustrations for Chinese families.'[49] Correspondingly, the society's publications, like most foreign missionary publications in Shanghai at the time, focused on two major subjects: Christianity and secular sciences, which, as historian Zou Zhenhuan has described, were often targeted at non-elite readers and the intelligentsia respectively.[50] Being as much an easily accessible introduction to Christianity as an authoritative source of Western knowledge about the world's civilizations and women's issues, Allen and Yin's collection, rather tactfully, stood at the intersection of these two categories. In addition, it also frequently employed images and illustrations, which added to its accessibility and attractiveness. Interestingly, when excerpts of the collection appeared in the more intellectual *A Review of Times*, such entertaining elements were entirely omitted.

While believing that the dissemination of Christianity required 'uprooting and destroying faith in [Chinese subjects'] own theories of the world and nature'[51], Allen developed a theory of 'equal emphasis on Chinese and Western learning' (*Zhong xi bingzhong* 中西並重)[52], which accorded with his tactful balance of gendered considerations. If, for Allen, 'the literati and the women of China' constituted the 'two large groups upon whom the missionary should concentrate his efforts'[53], they were also largely mutually complementary to each other in an imagined Chinese readership towards which *Women in All Lands* was linguistically and stylistically oriented. Hence, ironically, the many otherwise implied hierarchies in the collection project coincided with a rather 'horizontal'—to borrow from Benedict Anderson—view of its implied readership.[54] In an essay titled 'On How the Awakening of the Unenlightened Masses Can Emancipate the Elite' (*Yongzhong wendao shifang zhangshang shuo* 庸眾聞道釋放長上說) in the June 1902 issue of *A Review of the Times*, Allen and Yin compare late Qing China with the turn-of-the-nineteenth-century France faced by Napoleon and argue that, while elites have more power over 'state politics and laws'(*zhengfa* 政法), it is actually

48 Probably deliberately, this name echoed that of the Qing court-sponsored and Beijing-based *Tongwen guan* 同文館 (the Tongwen School, or the School of Combined Learning), an educational institution that taught foreign languages and Western learning.

49 Gu Changsheng 顧長聲: *Chuanjiaoshi yu jindai Zhongguo* 傳教士與近代中國. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe 1991, p. 156.

50 Zou Zhenhuan 鄒振環: Jin bai nian jian Shanghai Jidujiao wenzi chuban ji qi yingxiang 近百年間上海基督教文字出版及其影響. *Fudan xuebao* 3 (2002), p. 34.

51 Bennett, *Missionary Journalist in China*, p. 30.

52 Wang Lixin 王立新: *Meiguo chuanjiaoshi yu wan Qing Zhongguo xiandaihua* 美國傳教士與晚清中國現代化. Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe 2008, pp. 112–13.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

54 Benedict Anderson: *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London & New York: Verso 1991, p. 15.

the 'unenlightened masses', who significantly outnumber the former, that play the decisive role in shaping a country's 'social customs' (*fengsu* 風俗).[55]

Like Liang Qichao's seminal articles 'On Women's Education' (*Lun n*üxue 論女學) and 'On Wealth Production and Wealth Consumption' (*Lun shengli fenli* 論生利分利)[56], published in 1896 and 1902 respectively, *Women in All Lands* relates the elite/mass divide to the issue of gender. Yet, different from Liang's emphasis on the economic aspects, Allen and Yin treat the 'emancipation' of women—both as national subjects and as national readers—as part of religious enlightenment, which preconditions the advancement of human civilization in general. For example, the chapter 'A Summary of the 19th Century' in Volume 14, which is devoted to the history of Europe, contends that 'emancipation' and 'progress' were the 'two major principles' that enabled Christian European countries to not only surpass their non-Christian rivals but also develop a more humanitarian attitude toward women.[57] Embracing 'women' both as a universal measuring criterion and as key vocabulary in advancing his mission, Allen endeavoured to have the collection reach a wide readership ranging from undereducated populations to sovereign rulers. According to one anecdote, after the publication of the collection he carefully wrapped two sets of the books in imperial yellow silk and presented them to the Empress Dowager Cixi and the Japanese Emperor and Empress, in addition to sending out some other copies as gifts to Chinese officials and members of the gentry.[58]

Thus, with an obvious relevance to China's goal of self-strengthening in face of foreign threats, the multi-layered project of the 'emancipation' of women suggested by the collection functioned as a thematic centre to bring together a national Chinese readership that shared similar anxieties and frustrations. The comparative approach between the two geo-political frameworks for communal imaginations, China and 'all lands', paradoxically, reinforces the sense of 'boundary-oriented and horizontal'[59] connections within the nation and further calls for textual and social interventions by way of print media. Alongside its centralization of women's issues, the collection reflects a gradual incorporation of female readers in the modern Chinese national readership and a growing demand for publications targeted at women.[60]

55 Lin Lezhi 林樂知/Yin Pao-Lu 任保羅: Yongzhong wendao shifang zhangshang shuo 庸眾聞道釋放長上說. *Wanguo gongbao* 万国公报 161 (June 1902), p. 5.

56 See Liang Qichao, *Liang Qichao quanji*, pp. 30-33 and 695–702.

57 Allen, *Women in All Lands*, Vol. 14, pp. 44–46.

58 Yao Songling, *Yingxiang woguo weixin*, p. 68.

59 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 15.

60 Later, the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge among the Chinese launched a brand new monthly magazine titled *The Women's Messenger* (*Nü To Pao* 女鐸報, 1912-1951), which—with a total accumulated circulation of more than one million copies—became one of the longest-lasting and most influential women's periodicals in modern China. See Ma Changlin 馬長林 and Yang Hong 楊紅: Zongjiao, jiating, shehui—mianxiang nüxing Jidutu de xuanchuan 宗教、家庭、社會—面向女性基督徒的宣傳. In: Tao Feiya 陶飛亞: *Xingbie yu lishi. Jindai Zhongguo funü yu Jidujiao* 性別與歷史：近代中國婦女與 基督教. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe 2006, p. 25.

The Hierarchies of *Quandi*: The Construction of the 'Global' and a New Sense of Temporal Spatiality

Just like Shanghai's rise to economic and cultural eminence both as a newly opened port after the 1842 Treaty of Nanking and as 'the primary refuge'[61] for political and cultural elites of the Yangtze delta area during the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864), the quest for and dissemination of 'global' knowledge in the late Qing period—during which Shanghai served as a major centre—was a process of geo-cultural re-mapping of both China's indigenous intellectual practices and its position in the world. A brief glance at missionary publications in the Chinese language between the early nineteenth century and the early twentieth century shows the great popularity of such terms as 'all lands', 'world' or 'world's nations', and 'international.'[62] Not only did such geographical reconceptualization often involve transnational travelling[63], as in the case of both Allen and Yin, but the compilation and publication of these texts was also a complicated trans-lingual and trans-cultural restructuring of views of the world as much as of worldviews.

In this context, and given Allen's religious mission, the importation of 'knowledge' (*zhi* 知), which Allen emphasized not only in his works but also in his Chinese name Lezhi (literally, 'enjoy knowledge'), was unavoidably charged with different shades of meaning.[64] Allegedly a comprehensive study of 'women's customs' (*nüsu* 女俗) all over the world, *Women in All Lands* came out amid a rapid increase in the number of encyclopaedias produced in China

61 Yue Meng: *Shanghai and the Edges of Empires*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2006, p. 3.

62 For example, William Milne's (Mi Lian 米憐, 1785-1822) 30-volume collection *Quandi wanguo jilüe* 全地萬國紀略 (Sketch of the world, 1822), Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff's (Guo Shila 郭實臘, 1803–1851) *Gujin wanguo gangjian* 古今萬國綱鑑 (A history of the world's nations, from ancient times to the present, 1838; revised version published in 1850) and *Wanguo dili quanji* 萬國地理全集 (Universal geography, 1838), Richard Quarterman Way's (Wei Lizhe 禕理哲, 1819–1895) *Diqiu tushuo* 地球圖說 (Illustrated geography of the world, 1848; revised version published in 1856), Erastus Wentworth's (Wei Wan 萬為, 1813–1886) *Diqiu tushuolüe* 地球圖說略 (An illustrated introduction to world geography, 1857), William Alexander Parsons Martin's (Ding Weiliang 丁韙良, 1827–1916) *Wanguo lüli* 萬國律歷 (Elements of international law, 1864), Timothy Richard's (Li Timotai 李提摩太, 1845–1919) *Tianxia wuzhou ge daguo zhiyao* 天下五洲各大國志要 (A sketch of the major nations of the world, 1892).

63 As Leo Ou-fan Lee and Andrew J. Nathan have pointed out, the new methods of transportation – for instance, railways and postal services – were also among the important factors in the formation of the modern Chinese mass culture. Leo Ou-fan Lee/Andrew J. Nathan: The Beginning of Mass Culture. Journalism and Fiction in the Late Ch'ing and Beyond. In: David Johnson, Andrew Nathan, Evelyn Rawski (eds): *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*. Berkeley: University of California Press 1985, pp. 369–370.

64 Yin also expresses a similar emphasis on the educational function of *Women in All Lands* in his preface, which states, 'Knowledge is the first priority of all'; see Allen, *Women in All Lands*, Vol. 1, Yin's Preface, p. 1.

about global knowledge[65] and spread not only information of the outside world but also the modern visions that had brought together such knowledge. As a result, the hierarchical layers of this 'global' knowledge contributed to a re-construction of the sense of temporal spatiality among its Chinese readers, who no longer saw the country as the centre but instead as 'one corner of the world' (*tianxia zhi yi yu* 天下之一隅), as it is put in William Muirhead and Jiang Jianren's *A Comprehensive Gazetteer of Geography*.[66]

Like many of its peer missionary publications, *Women in All Lands* appropriates the Neo-Confucian tradition of 'grasp[ing] the single unchangeable universal principle through observing different things,' or *gezhi* 格致, to combine 'the missionaries' ideal of God' with secular geographical, historical, and political information.[67] Titled 'How Ancient People Viewed the Earth' (*Guren lun diqiu zhi xing* 古人論地球之形), the first chapter in the first volume traces historical theories about the earth (as a floating island, a bounded piece of land under a dome of sky, the Cosmic Turtle, a hexahedron, or as indicated in Strabo's *Geographica*, Cosmas Indicopleustes' map, etc.) while using Jesus' birth as a reference point in dating historical periods. Similarly, the following chapter, 'On the Real Shape of the Earth' (*Diqiu zhenxing lüelun* 地球真形略論), juxtaposes a modern world map with a picture of 'The World Created by God' (*Zhu zao tiandi* 主造天地) to illustrate the contemporary Western understanding of astronomy. As with William Muirhead and Jiang Jianren's insertion of a chapter based on the Bible and titled 'Creation of Species' (*Chuangzao tiandi wanwu ji* 創造天地萬物記) at the beginning of their 15-volume collection *A Comprehensive Gazetteer of Geography*, this integration of Christian religion and Western science is much more dynamic than a simple importation of foreign knowledge.

The tradition of foreign missionary publications on global geographic and cultural knowledge written in Chinese dates back to such seventeenth-century works as *Kunyu wanguo quantu* 坤輿萬國全圖 (A complete map of all nations in the world, 1602) by Matteo Ricci (with the help of his Chinese collaborators) and *Zhifang waiji* 職方外紀 (Chronicles of foreign lands, 1623) by Giulio Aleni and his indigenous assistant Yang Tingyun 楊廷筠 (1562–1627). Nevertheless, *Women in All Lands*, like many similar missionary texts in the late Qing dynasty, lays a much stronger emphasis on the hierarchical relationships among different parts of the world and sees China as being in a much more disadvantageous condition. In his preface, Allen divides human civilizations into three levels—the unenlightened, the enlightened, and the most civilized—and states that 'The chapters in this collection are also

65 There was more than one momentum for printed encyclopaedic works in China between 1895 and 1911. See Milena Doleželová-Velingerová/Rudolf G. Wagner: Chinese Encyclopaedias of New Global Knowledge (1870–1930). Changing Ways of Thought. In: Milena Doleželová-Velingerová, Rudolf G. Wagner (eds): *Chinese Encyclopaedias of New Global Knowledge (1870–1930): Changing Ways of Thought*. Berlin: Springer-Verlag 2014, p. 16.

66 William Muirhead: *Dili quanzhi* 地理全志. Shanghai: Mohai shuguan 1853, p. 2.

67 Yue Meng, *Shanghai and the Edges of Empires*, p. 14.

organized accordingly.'[68] Except for the first volume, which serves as a general introduction, and the last two volumes focusing on China and its comparison with other nations, the other 18 volumes of the collection unfold roughly along this supposed spectrum of civilization: firstly, 'uncivilized' peoples; secondly, East Asia and South Asia; thirdly, 'Islamic countries in West Asia and Egypt'; fourthly, 'Christian and Jewish countries in West Asia'; fifthly, Europe; and sixthly, 'the United States and other parts of the American continent.'[69] To Gong Xinming, whose view might have represented those of quite a few of the Chinese reformist elite, such a comparative ranking was expected to reveal the gaps between China and the more advanced Western societies so as to foster social reform.[70]

When elaborating on the different strata of human civilization, the chapter 'A Discussion on Human Civilizations in All Lands' (*Zonglun diqiumian renmin jiaohua* 縱論地球面人民教化) in Volume 1 contends that, although China's cultural achievements were like those of 'the most civilized countries', its subjects were still practising idol worship and other false social customs, including the suppression of women, so much so that it had become incapable of proper governance and failed to reach the highest level.[71] In contrast, it argues, the more advanced Christian nations of Europe and North America followed Jesus' teachings on setting men and women free and this constituted the key to their success. In this view, conversion to Christianity would serve as a means for China to move up in the rankings of national strengths, which idea Fan Yi also embraces in his postscript to the first volume.[72]

The asymmetric hybridization and assemblage of the information about'all lands' in different spatial-temporal positions have obviously informed the Chinese title page of the collection, which introduces the publication date by juxtaposing 'the 29th year of Guangxu, the year of *guimao*' with 'the year of our Lord 1903.' The paralleling of the Chinese imperial calendar system and the Christian calendar system, as Zou Zhenhuan found in the chronological juxtaposition of the Chinese and Christian calendars in Allen's earlier *Chronological Tables of World History* (*Siyi biannian biao* 四裔編年表) published in 1874 in collaboration with Yan Liangxun 嚴良勛 (1845–1914) and Li Fengbao 李鳳苞 (1834–1887), introduces a different 'vision of time from another cultural system.'[73]

In this light, Allen's proposal in his preface for a shift from a historical view of dynastic cycles to a globally oriented transnational vision can also be read as an advocacy for a new sense of temporal spatiality, which, while encouraging synchronistic comparisons across nations and horizontal identification within the nation, has derived from a hierarchical view of the world's civilizations. For one thing, in the eyes of many Westerners and Chinese reformists,

68 Allen, *Women in All Lands*, Vol. 1, Lin's Preface, p. 2.
69 *Ibid*., Vol. 1, Allen's Preface, p. 2.
70 *Ibid*., Vol. 21, Postscript to *Women in All Lands*, p. 59.
71 *Ibid*., Vol. 1, p. 16.
72 *Ibid*., Vol. 1, Postscript to *Women in All Lands*, p. 2.
73 Zou Zhenhuan 鄒振環: Siyi biannianbiao yu wan Qing Zhong Xi shijian guannian de jiaorong 四裔編年表與晚清中西時間觀念的交融. *Jindaishi yanjiu* 167:5 (2008), p. 92.

the preference for the old over the new, as Thomas F. Wade (Wei Tuoma 威妥瑪, 1818–1895) wrote in his report to the Qing government, was one of the main reasons for China's backwardness[74]; the overcoming of it, on the other hand, could symbolize a fundamental change. For another, the 'compression of the diachronic developments in world history into a synchronic Other opposed to China' during the importation of Western knowledge of global history, as Jinlin Huang has pointed out, added to Chinese intellectuals' shared anxieties over the imminent national crises.[75] Indeed, the paradoxical interchangeability between the lure and the threat of the 'global' was a determining factor for the supply and demand structure of such knowledge itself.

Conclusion

The turn of the twentieth century was a crucial moment that witnessed many entangled transformations in China's book and print culture. The collaboration between Allen and Yin and the reception of *Women in All Lands* by members of the Chinese elite such as Gong Xinming and Fan Yi not only indicates nuanced negotiations of national/transnational subjectivity and cultural agency but also revises the indigenous conceptions of authorship and cultural transmission, bringing about a more fluid picture of knowledge distribution through printed texts. While attracting the attention of different groups of readers, the thematic focus on a multi-layered emancipation of women crystallizes the gendered and stratified formation of a modern, national Chinese readership at a contested intersection of horizontal and hierarchical imaginations. As a result, the interactive dynamics between, on the one hand, the geopolitical and spatial-temporal hierarchies underlying the constructed knowledge about 'all lands' and, on the other hand, the demand and supply for such publications at a time of China's national crises reshape the relationships among women, print culture, and modern China in an emphatically 'global' context.

74 Wang Shu-hwai 王樹槐: *Wairen yu Wuxu bianfa* 外人與戊戌變法. Taipei: Academia Sinica 1965, p. 3.
75 Huang Jinlin 黃金麟: *Lishi, shenti, guojia. Jindai Zhongguo de shenti xingcheng, 1895–1937* 歷史、身體、國家：近代中國的身體形成，1895-1937. Taipei: Linking Publishing 2001, p. 185.

III
Book Culture in Mao's China, 1949–1976

5
Crime, Love, and Science: Continuity and Change in Hand-copied Entertainment Fiction (*Shouchaoben*) from the Cultural Revolution

Lena Henningsen

Introduction: The Transformation of Book Culture during China's 'Long 1970s'

During the second half of the Twentieth century China witnessed tremendous change and political turmoil. After the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the country set off on the path to socialism, a path that also led to innumerable political campaigns against those considered enemies of the Party or 'the people'. Moreover, two mass campaigns—the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution—resulted in the deaths of millions of people and the traumatization of countless more. Literature accompanied these campaigns and catastrophes in different ways. In his 1942 talks on literature and the arts at Yan'an, Mao Zedong defined the role that authors and artists had to play in the years to come[1]: Art for its own sake was passé. Instead, art had to serve political ends, i.e. those set by the Party and its policies. Published literature had to serve propagandistic aims. As a result, the literary field gained prominence in itself and time and again became a space for political debates or campaigns. As is widely known, the play *Hai Rui ba guan* 海瑞罢官 (Hai Rui dismissed from office) by Tian Han 田汉 (1898–1968) led to the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, exemplifying the close connection between the literary field, book culture and political developments of the era.

One may be tempted to regard literary developments as a series of ruptures. Socialist realist literature adapted to Chinese circumstances dominated the so-called 'seventeen years' (i.e. the period from 1949 to 1966).[2] Like its predecessor in the Soviet Union, Chinese Socialist Realism aimed at a 'truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development [...] combined with the task of ideologically remaking and training the labouring people in the spirit of socialism'.[3] This intensified with the introduction of literature of

1 Mao Zedong: Mao Zedong's 'Talks at the Yan'an Conference on literature and art', trans. Bonnie McDougall. Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies , University of Michigan 1980.

2 For an insightful analysis of this socialist realist literature, see: Krista van Fleit Hang: *Literature the People Love: Reading Chinese Texts from the Early Maoist Period (1949–1966).* New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2013.

3 Andrei Zhdanov, quoted in Hilary Chung: Introduction: Socialist Realism. In: Hilary Chung (ed.): *In the Party Spirit: Socialist Realism and Literary Practice in the Soviet Union, East Germany and China*. Amsterdam: Rodopi 1996, pp. x–xviii.

Revolutionary Realism and Revolutionary Romanticism during the Cultural Revolution.[4] The official end of the Cultural Revolution was marked by yet another abrupt change, with a clear inward turn and a focus on the individual when Obscure Poetry (*menglongshi* 朦胧诗) dared new approaches to the self, when Scar Literature (*shanghen wenxue* 伤痕文学) began to confront the wrongs of the Cultural Revolution, and when a genuine bestseller market came into being.[5]

Literary and book culture, however, is more than that which is published officially. Underground literary activities complemented official literary life, offering its participants intellectual input, psychological support and entertainment. While unofficial poetry—especially that produced in the context of the 1978 Democracy Wall movement—has been clearly acknowledged as a precursor to Obscure Poetry, the role and impact of fiction produced, circulated and consumed illegally during the Cultural Revolution has received little scholarly attention.[6] This body of texts, which largely consists of entertainment fiction, will be the focus of this chapter. Some of these texts have found their way into regular publishing since the end of the Cultural Revolution, with some of them enjoying immense popularity and commercial success on the book market. Other texts have never been officially published.

This chapter will examine two of these fictional stories that circulated underground during the Cultural Revolution and the early years of the post-Mao era. By situating these texts within their contemporary context, the broader framework of practices of reading and writing, I will elaborate on the reasons why they had such a tremendous impact on their readers, as well as on later literary practices. I argue that *shouchaoben* fiction serves as a link between Cultural Revolutionary literary practices, their precursors and their successors in several respects. In terms of content, these stories are built on earlier genres of espionage, crime and love—topics that resounded well with readers within the context of Cultural Revolution experiences. As such, the *shouchaoben* continued and transformed earlier literary traditions from the Republican Era and the early years of the PRC. They also prepared the ground for the post-Cultural Revolution literary bestseller market. In terms of literary practices, *shouchaoben* continued earlier practices of unofficial circulation, but brought those to an unprecedented height. Carefully balancing a continuity of earlier traditions and incremental change, these texts and the literary practices connected with them thus bridge what often appears as a rupture in the development of Chinese book culture. In consequence, *shouchaoben* practice calls for a re-evaluation of literary periodization. I therefore propose to regard literary practices as

4 This literature has been discussed extensively by Lan Yang. See, for example: Lan Yang: *Chinese Fiction of the Cultural Revolution*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press 1998.

5 On the bestseller market in China after Mao see Chapters 7, 9 and 10 in this volume.

6 An introductory essay by Perry Link as well as the publications of Yang Jian are exceptions to this. See Perry Link: Hand-Copied Entertainment Fiction from the Cultural Revolution. In: Perry Link, Richard Madsen, Paul Pickowicz (eds): *Unofficial China. Popular Culture and Thought in the People's Republic*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield 1989, pp. 1–36. Yang Jian 杨健: *1966–1976 de dixia wenxue* 1966–1976 的地下文学. Beijing: Zhonggongdangshi chubanshe 2013.

an essential part of the transformations that China underwent during its 'long 1970s', i.e. a period starting roughly with the Cultural Revolution but continuing into the early 1980s.

To this end, I will discuss two representative stories and the practices of their production and circulation. The discussion is based on different extant handwritten copies and post-Cultural Revolution published versions thereof. The first story, *Three Plum Blossoms*, occurs at least in five different versions; here I will discuss two of them in depth. This story is a good example of entertainment fiction from that era in that it focuses on espionage, murder and love, as well as in its socialist realist heritage consisting of a particular design of its heroes. *Three Plum Blossoms* can also stand for the genre as such in that it touches upon issues pertinent to the Cultural Revolution. The second story, Zhang Yang's *The Second Handshake*, represents one of the most widely circulated *shouchaoben* and turned into a bestseller after its official publication in 1979. This case not only allows insights into the processes of variation and change among different versions, it also illustrates the conditions of production and circulation of Cultural Revolution *shouchaoben* literature. I will proceed to this analysis after an overview of the particular literary context of the Cultural Revolution in which these texts are situated.

Context: Reading and Writing Literature during the Cultural Revolution

Two youth movements shaped the literary practices of the Cultural Revolution. The early years of the period were dominated by the Red Guard movement which was then followed by the Rustication Movement. Official literary and cultural life during the Cultural Revolution was dominated by brightly coloured propagandistic works, including the poetry of Mao Zedong, fiction by Hao Ran such as his *Jinguang dadao* 金光大道 (Golden road)[7], and model works (*yangbanxi* 样板戏) such as *Bai mao nü* 白毛女 (The white-haired girl) or *Hongse niangzi jun* 红色娘子军 (The red detachment of women),[8] as well as ubiquitous propaganda posters. Serving political ends, these works usually present a dark pre-Communist past contrasting with a bright present and future. In their predictability and lack of variation, however, these official works seemed dull to many contemporaries. Virtually everything that did not fit the political and propagandistic requirements was banned: works from the seventeen years, from before, and from foreign countries were deemed 'revisionist'. Libraries and schools were closed and publishing was interrupted during the early years of the Cultural Revolution. The Red Guard movement represents the political radicalization of Chinese youth, and it led to an increased mobility as some Red Guards travelled widely across the country. It resulted in intellectual and literary turmoil, as houses and libraries were looted and many authors and

7 Paul Clark: *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008, pp. 220–23.

8 Barbara Mittler: *A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2012, pp. 33–127. Clark, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution*, pp. 10–108.

intellectual authorities were persecuted. Members of some Red Guard factions also gained their first experience of publishing, as they used their access to printing machines to publish their respective faction's newspapers, however short-lived they may have been.[9]

The Rustication Movement had already begun during the early 1960s to fight urban unemployment among Chinese youth. As of 1968, rustication increased drastically as a means to put an end to the terror of the Red Guards and to pacify Chinese cities. Between 1962 and 1980 almost 18 million urban-educated youth (*zhishi qingnian* 知识青年 or *zhiqing* 知青), or about a tenth of China's non-agrarian population[10], were sent to the countryside. Distance travelled, length of stay, and living and working conditions varied depending on the time of departure and a family's political connections. For most *zhiqing*, rustication proved an important experience. While for some rustication turned out to be a positive, liberating experience, many suffered badly. They were confronted with harsh living conditions and with emotional deprivation: hard manual labour, insufficient nutrition, separation from family members, impossibility of a satisfying love life, abuse and in some cases sexual harassment from local cadres.[11] The disproportion between their thirst for reading and learning and the scarcity of reading matter meant intellectual and literary deprivation.

However, even during these years, literary and cultural entertainment existed. To begin with, some of the model works were adapted or interpreted by audiences in ways unanticipated by the propagandists.[12] Moreover, for those well-connected and daring enough, clandestine practices of reading and writing offered ways to allay their literary and artistic hunger. A lively literary underground emerged. While official literary life was indeed characterized by dullness and lack of variety, underground literary practices and literary works blossomed. Some Red Guards did not destroy their loot after ransacking houses, and instead they kept the books, read them and circulated them among friends. In their thirst for reading matter, others would break into closed libraries and steal from there. While the general readership had no access to works deemed counterrevolutionary or revisionist, the Chinese government sponsored an 'internal' (*neibu* 内部) publishing system for members of the Party elite. Through this, the highest ranking cadres in the country gained access to translations of works by authors from the West and from 'revisionist' countries of the Eastern Bloc. Assisting these cadres in their

9 Nicolai Volland: *The Control of the Media in the People's Republic of China*. Heidelberg: University of Heidelberg 2003, pp. 395–439. For a detailed account of the historical developments and the often erratic decision-making of the top leadership, see: Roderick MacFarquhar/Michael Schoenhals: *Mao's Last Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2006.

10 Yihong Pan: *Tempered in the Revolutionary Furnace: China's Youth in the Rustication Movement*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books 2003, p. 1. Pan calculates the overall numbers of *zhiqing* slightly differently from Bonnin (below), yet both authors arrive at a similar result.

11 Michel Bonnin: *The Lost Generation: The Rustication of China's Educated Youth (1968–1980),* trans. Krystyna Horko. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press 2013, pp. 296–300. See also Yihong Pan, *Tempered in the Revolutionary Furnace*, pp. 141–43. Pan also alerts us to harassment other than sexual.

12 Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution*, pp. 11–24. For the innovations in the model works see Clark, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution*.

ideological preparation against the enemy, the system produced over 18,000 titles between 1949 and 1986.[13] These volumes are commonly referred to as 'grey cover books' (*huipishu* 灰皮书) which covered topics in politics, law and culture or as 'yellow cover books' (*huangpishu* 黄皮书), which were mainly literary texts. However, over the course of time, the restrictions on the circulation of these texts were not kept up efficiently, and many of the cadres' children also read the texts and discussed them with their friends. Likewise, Red Guards got access as they looted the homes of these families. With the rustication movement of the late 1960s and 1970s, many of these volumes circulated further, as the *zhiqing* took them along to the countryside. As the volumes became physically torn and copies were rare, young people would hand-copy the texts themselves.[14]

Literary practices were thus of a collective nature, with individuals joining in their efforts to produce, circulate and preserve texts. Poetry and philosophical texts were discussed in underground literary salons.[15] Likewise, letter-writing was an important pastime for many of the *zhiqing*. Through letters they would keep contact with family back home and friends sojourning in other remote regions of the country, but they would also correspond with likeminded people unknown to them before on all matters pertaining to their lives, including their reading (and writing). One *shouchaoben, Gongkai de qingshu* 公开的情书 (Open love letters), explicitly broaches this issue in its triangular love story. Narrated as an epistolary novel, the text consists of the letters exchanged among a number of *zhiqing* in 1970.[16]

Practices of *shouchaoben* fiction have to be seen within this larger context. In most cases, these texts were written by amateurs for their own pleasure as well as for that of their friends. Copies would be passed on among friends, classmates or siblings. The rustication movement enlarged the radius of circulation, as the *zhiqing* took along manuscripts to the remote places they were sent to. Given the circulation and the fragile material nature of the texts—they were mostly written on ordinary, very thin note paper—the copies would disappear or be torn apart. Some readers would then copy the stories anew, in some cases even producing multiple copies by using carbon paper or other simple reproduction techniques. In the process, some of these copyists modified the text, either by filling gaps that had appeared as pages had gone missing, or by improving those parts they may have found unsatisfactory. In addition,

13 Song Yongyi 宋永毅: Wenge zhong de huangpishu he huipishu 文革中的黄皮书和灰皮书. *Ershi Shiji* 42 (1997), pp. 59–64.

14 Both internally published books and those from before the Cultural Revolution were copied avidly. Yu Hua, for example, vividly describes how he and a friend copied a hand-copied version of Dumas' *La Dame aux Camélias*. Yu Hua: *China in Ten Words*, trans. Allan H. Barr. New York: Pantheon Books 2011, pp. 43–46.

15 Yang Jian, *1966-1976 de dixia wenxue*, pp. 46–81.

16 Jin Fan 靳凡 (Liu Qingfeng 刘青峰): Gongkai de qingshu 公开的情书. *Shiyue* 1 (1980), pp. 4–67. I have discussed this story in detail elsewhere. See: Lena Hennigsen: What is Reader? Participation and Intertextuality in Hand-Copied Entertainment Fiction from the Chinese Literature and Culture (forthcoming, fall 2017).

stories were transmitted orally. These copyists were essential for the creative process and may therefore be called secondary authors. In the case of Zhang Yang (see below) the repeated disappearance of his story prompted him to constantly rewrite the text, modifying, enlarging and refining it over time.[17]

These literary practices promised intellectual exchange and entertaining distraction from the hardships of everyday life. Yet, they could also entail danger: In the aftermath of the Lin Biao affair, persecution of underground literary activities increased. In autumn 1974, Yao Wenyuan started a nationwide cleansing of underground literary activities.[18] The members of a number of salons were investigated and arrested. In the case of Zhao Yifan's 赵一凡 salon, most of its members were affected. Their offences included 'running a literary salon, writing, collecting and circulating reactionary fiction and poetry'[19], and uniting in their reactionary attacks against the central authorities and the Anti-Lin Biao and Anti-Confucius Campaign. These were no trivial offences and could result in long prison sentences or even the death penalty.[20] These prosecutions in turn impacted on literary production and on an author's authorial self-concept (as in the case of Zhang Yang, discussed below).

Texts are thus closely tied to their contexts, as the conditions of their production, transformation, circulation, and consumption had a decisive impact on the contents, style and physical shape of the respective manuscripts. They represent a central element of Cultural Revolutionary book culture—not least, because these texts were mostly referred to as books (*shu* 书) or fiction (*xiaoshuo* 小说). Moreover, these practices also impacted on the transformation of PRC book culture after 1976. The cases of *The Plum Blossom Party* and of *The Second Handshake* exemplify the impact of fictional texts and literary practices during and after the Cultural Revolution.

Three Plum Blossoms: Stability across Variation

Espionage is one of the dominant topics in Cultural Revolution-era *shouchaoben*. Many of the stories take place in the early years of the PRC, and some (among them *The Plum Blossom Party*), even during the Cultural Revolution, i.e. in the era in which they were written, circulated and read. The story circulated in numerous hand-copied manuscripts. The present analysis is based on three different representative copies. Two of these share the same title, i.e.

17 Zhang Yang 张扬: *Di er ci woshou wenziyu* 第二次握手文字狱. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui chubanshe 1999, pp. 63, 65, 73.

18 Yang Jian, *1966–1976 de dixia wenxue,* p. 230.

19 *Ibid*., p. 233.

20 Yu Luoke 遇罗克 (1942–1970), author of the widely circulated essay Chushenlun 出身论 (On family background) was executed. While some recounted being treated decently in jail, Chen Xiaodan 郑小丹 died in prison, *ibid*., p. 232–33.

San duo meihua 三朵梅花 (Three plum blossoms, hereafter *3PB*)[21] and are almost identical in wording, while the third, *Meihua an* 梅花案 (The plum blossom case, hereafter *TPBC*)[22] differs more extensively.

On their cover, the texts provide no clue about their authors. However, authors and secondary authors left their imprints inside the texts. Differences and similarities among different versions point to different authorial decisions and to the creative impetus that drove secondary authors, transforming the extant text. Given the close similarities of the two *3PB* texts, the following elaborations focus on a comparison of one *3PB* text with *TPBC*. The aim is not so much to create a distinct genealogy of texts (which is impossible and not necessarily meaningful), but to point at variation and continuity as a measurement of creativity. The existence of diverse copies, of similarities and differences across the different versions of the story first of all attests to its sheer popularity, while at the same time it indicates different nuances in interpretation of the underlying story and of the Cultural Revolution as represented in the text. This section therefore begins with a summary of the plot and a contextualization of the themes, to be followed by a comparison of the manuscripts.

Plot and Themes

The action in *TPBC* takes place in 1967, when former President Li Zongren 李宗仁 and his wife Guo Dejie 郭德洁 return to the Mainland. They participate in a banquet in Guangzhou where Guo is poisoned in public. Investigations by section chief Shen 沈处长 from the local security forces and section chief Xie 谢处长, a colleague from Beijing, unearth a network of Nationalist Party (GMD) spies that included Wang Guangmei 王光美, wife of Liu Shaoqi 刘少奇. The network consists of these historical figures as well as of fictional characters such as Zhu Na 朱娜 (or Mi Na 米娜 as she calls herself in *3PB*) who had been arrested in the months preceding the liberation of Chongqing from the GMD in 1949, but managed to escape. Back then, she had fallen in love with Xie, who worked for the Communist underground and used the alias Fan Ya 凡亚 to seduce her. Keys to the disclosure are mysterious plum blossoms which contain the names of the members of the GMD working as spies in China. Plum blossom buttons on the clothes of the suspects and a special liquid are required to decipher these names. Xie discovers the enemy's plans for an imminent assault on Zhongnanhai, the seat of the government in Beijing, which can thus be averted.

21 *San duo meihua* 三朵梅花 (hereafter *3PB*; anonymous Cultural Revolution hand-copied manuscript in the author's collection, dated June 20, 1976); *San duo meihua* 三朵梅花 (anonymous Cultural Revolution hand-copied manuscript in the author's collection, undated). Of these, the second is incomplete, stopping in the middle of the third chapter which serves to underscore the fragile nature of *shouchaoben*.

22 *Meihua an* 梅花案 (hereafter *TPBC*; anonymous Cultural Revolution hand-copied manuscript in the author's collection, photocopy, undated). Further versions of the story circulated under a similar title: *Meihua dang de anjian* 梅花党的案件 (The case of the plum blossom party). For reasons of space, these are excluded from the present analysis.

Murder, espionage and love are intertwined with heroic efforts to save the life of Mao Zedong, as well as the government and nation. Central to the plot is the public security apparatus, described as a well-functioning organization whose members are objectively searching for evidence and striving to enforce the law, the principles of the party and justice. However, there are traitors within the system. They endanger the institution, but in the end are uncovered so that the harm they do comes to an end. The texts thus combine an ideal that clearly did not exist during the Cultural Revolution (fair and just jurisdiction as well as an impartial police) with political heroism and entertainment—the thrill brought about through the love and crime aspects in the story.

The central leadership even appears in the plot. Xie is sent to Guangzhou by no one less than Zhou Enlai and reports back to him. Early in the story, Zhou is depicted as reading the works of Mao, and, in the final scene, reports to him that the case is solved.[23] Averted attacks on chairman Mao are recurring elements in the plots of *shouchaoben*. In *San jin Nanjing cheng* 三进南京城 (Three journeys to Jiangnan), for example, Mao is the target of an attempted attack. This story and similarly titled versions, in fact, fictionalize the Lin Biao affair, as the plot centres on a thwarted attack on Chairman Mao's train as it crosses the Nanjing Changjiang bridge in September 1971.[24] Likewise, in the *Three Plum Blossoms* stories, the alleged masterminds behind the plotted assault are real-life figures, i.e Guo Dejie and Wang Guangmei. This anchors the fictional story within the life experiences and rumours circulating during the Cultural Revolution. Whereas *Three Journeys to Jiangnan* is related to an actual event turned historical fact, the *Three Plum Blossom* stories are linked to the general climate generated through Cultural Revolution campaigns, in which unsubstantiated allegations of espionage for the GMD, the United States or the Soviet Union would take an immense human toll.[25]

TPBC even reinforces these claims with paratextual signals. The title of the story in itself draws attention to the investigations of this 'case', while a brief preamble to the story gives the text the appearance of a real case:

> The story took place in the year 1967 of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The year 1967 was a critical moment in the violent struggle of the two lines. The reason for this was the return of Li Zongren of the GMD and his wife from abroad to participate in matters concerning the unification of the motherland. However, at one banquet, his wife, Ms. Guo Dejie, was suddenly murdered, [so] the soldiers (*zhanshi* 战士) from our public security began to fight against this case.[26]

The preamble situates the story within the turbulent early years of the Cultural Revolution and the martial language reinforces this. This text goes even further than the other version,

23 *3PB*, pp. 0, 49; *TBPC*, p. 25.

24 See, for example: *San jin Nanjing cheng* 三进南京城 (anonymous Cultural Revolution hand-copied manuscript in the author's collection, 1974/1976). The story thus is astonishingly close to historical facts, see: MacFarquhar/Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, pp. 324–36.

25 *Ibid*., pp. 253–59.

26 *TPBC*, p. 1.

not only by employing historical background as a further layer of suspense but also, conversely, by explaining real life events (i.e the struggle of the two lines) and, by implication, the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution.

Today, one can rule out that Guo and Wang had plotted against Mao in 1967: Guo had already died in 1966 and Wang was under attack from the Red Guards herself in 1967. However, when the *shouchaoben* was written and circulated, this may not have been widely known. Moreover, one of the accusations against Wang, who earlier in her life had served as a translator and had accompanied her husband on trips abroad, was espionage for the US. The fictional story of murder, love, espionage and betrayal thus serves as an explication of historical fact—thus blurring, or at least playing with, the divide between factual and fictional elements in the story. This play may be also linked to the anonymous and collective nature of the authorship of these texts. With no author's name on the manuscript, a reader might be tempted to take the fictional story to be true, or to link it to rumours circulating the country. Moreover, the absence of the preamble from the other two versions of the text points to the unstable nature of the text and to the collective nature of its authorship.

Comparison of Different Versions of Three Plum Blossoms

A close reading of the different versions of the story demonstrates textual stability across difference. This observation renders *Three Plum Blossoms* a representative *shouchaoben*. The story consists of a stable core, but varies in the design of its details and sub-plots.[27] Overall, *3PB* is about 10 percent longer than *TPBC*. Minor differences include the changes to names or single words, as well as changes in punctuation, section headings and sections.[28] Providing readers with a table of contents and a list of characters, *3PB* appears to have been produced with more care. While in some instances, sentences or parts of sentences appear to be (almost) identical in both versions, in other parts, the story is told in different words. In these instances of difference, the author(s) mostly decided to embellish the plot with descriptions of scenery. This suggests a stable frame for the story that most likely was unquestioned by all authors. It also suggests an at least indirect connection of the texts, as some elements were modified while others remained identical.

The appearance of Mao Zedong in the texts likewise illustrates stability across difference in the two versions. Mao is referred to in different scenes and in different ways, though with a similar effect on the text. The first scene of the text zooms in on Zhou Enlai sitting late at night on the sofa in his office. In *TPBC*, he is 'reading and commenting on documents'[29] and is thus portrayed as a diligent bureaucrat. In *3PB*, Zhou is reading a book: the works of

27 This also holds true for the *Three Journeys to Jiangnan* as well as for the different versions of *Yi lü jinhuangse de toufa* 一缕金黄色的头发 (A strand of golden hair), yet another story of murder, espionage and love.

28 In *3PB*, chapters are numbered and titled. In *TPBC,* chapters are only numbered, but some are missing, and they sometimes appear in different places.

29 *TPBC*, p. 1.

Mao Zedong.[30] This shifts the focus to Zhou as immersing himself in the 'correct' ideology, and firmly acknowledging Mao as the ideological point of reference for all action. At a later point in the novel, *TPBC* refers to Mao where *3PB* does not. Here, a suspect is arrested and Xie reminds him of Party principles and of the fact that in the end the Party will find out everything, so he had better confess everything.[31] In *TPBC*, Xie emphasizes this by adding 'Chairman Mao instructs us that'[32], thus calling on and reinforcing Mao as the highest authority. This quotation at the same time firmly anchors the text within Cultural Revolution linguistic practice.

Passages with a higher degree of variance among different versions also confirm the observation of stability across difference. *TPBC* ends with a phone call from Zhou Enlai to Mao Zedong informing him of the success of the investigations[33], thus constructing a parallel to the beginning of the text that saw Zhou studying documents. In *3PB*, Zhou calls Mao with good news and announces that he will report more details the next day.[34] Then, however, follow another two pages. First the beauty of Beijing in the morning is elaborated on and the progress of the 'great socialist motherland'[35] is emphasised. Then the focus shifts to the investigators in Guangzhou and their latest findings (which are missing from *TPBC*): Guo and Wang had planned 23 actions against the CCP, including the burning of Zhongnanhai. Therefore, secret surveillance of Wang is arranged, in order to protect Zhongnanhai and Mao Zedong. In a brief epilogue, Xie's departure connects Beijing and Guangzhou: as the red sun rises in the East, shining over the beautiful Guangzhou scenery, colleagues from Guangzhou accompany Xie to the airport. As he leaves, he is asked to convey their regards to Mao, and they almost catch a glimpse of Beijing themselves as they observe how Xie's plane disappears toward the capital.[36] The rise of the red sun in the East is a clear reference to *Dongfang hong* 东方红 (The east is red), the unofficial national anthem of the Cultural Revolution years and to Chairman Mao, who was symbolized by the sun. His radiation and authority are thus omnipresent, both in the capital and in Southern city of Guangzhou.

A great amount of stability across difference can be observed in the present sample. Other popular Cultural Revolutionary *shouchaoben* demonstrate greater variation across different versions than observed here. This is evident from different sub-plots or differences in the characterization of fictional characters. In the above-mentioned *Three Journeys to Jiangnan,* for example, the attack on Mao is averted by a young *zhiqing* who had resisted the rustication movement and later was lured into a fake 'liberation army'. While some versions describe

30 *3PB*, pp. 0–1.
31 *3PB*, p. 40.
32 *TPBC*, p. 21.
33 *TPBC*, p. 25.
34 *3PB*, p. 49.
35 *3PB*, p. 49.
36 *3PB*, pp. 50–51.

him as a drifting and somewhat rebellious young man[37], in another version he appears as a petty criminal.[38] However, even here, a stable core of the story in question seems to be acknowledged by all authors.

Shouchaoben, like the *Three Plum Blossoms* sample or the *Three Journeys to Jiangnan* texts are an essential part of Cultural Revolutionary book culture. As official literary life had come to a standstill, these underground activities and the products circulated there offered their readers suspense and entertainment. Moreover, some of these entertaining stories had links to the reality of the Cultural Revolution. These could be explicit links of content and paratext, as in the case of *The Plum Blossom* or *Three Journeys to Jiangnan* stories. Other stories might not be directly linked to the time of writing, to its historical events, campaigns or rumours then current. However, situations of longing for a fulfilling love-life, or for a loving family, and episodes of resistance against the orders of the Party are topics that may have resonated deeply with the experiences of the *zhiqing.* Taken together with other literary practices described at the outset of this chapter, *shouchaoben* literature, its creation, consumption and re-creation thus filled a literary, cultural and intellectual void.

The Second Handshake: Circulation, Re-writing and Censorship

My second example, *Di er ci woshou* 第二次握手 (The second handshake) by Zhang Yang 张扬[39], can be regarded as one of the most popular Cultural Revolution *shouchaoben.* Its case offers illuminating insights into the processes of production and circulation of *shouchaoben* during the Cultural Revolution and into the early reform era. This text differs from most others, as its author had been arrested on the orders of Yao Wenyuan and thus became known, first to the authorities and later to his readers. Moreover, in 1999 he published 'The literary inquisition of *The Second Handshake*', in which he documents the genesis of the text as well as the persecution he suffered. Thus, while this book on the one hand records the judicial atrocities inflicted by the Cultural Revolution, on the other hand, it may be read as Zhang's deliberations on the role and nature of literary writing and authorship. In this section, I will therefore present text and context of *The Second Handshake* to illustrate its popularity during the Cultural Revolution and its influence on Chinese book culture of the early reform era.

37 See, for example: *Ye Fei san xia Jiangnan* 叶飞三下江南, copied by Liang Qiulan 梁秋兰 (1977). In: Bai Shihong 白士弘 (ed.): *'Wenge" shouchao wencun* '文革"手抄文存. Beijing: Xinhua shudian 2001, pp. 67–93, p. 89.

38 *San jin Nanjing cheng*, p. 9.

39 Zhang Yang 张扬: *Di er ci woshou* 第二次握手. Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe 1979.

Plot and Themes

The Second Handshake tells the story of a love triangle amidst political turmoil in China and the rest of the world from the late 1920s through the 1950s. In 1928, after the accidental meeting of students Su Guanlan and Ding Jieqiong—he, Su, had saved her, Ding, from drowning in the sea—the two fall deeply in love with each other. However, Su's father's interventions and the historical circumstances of China under GMD rule prevent a happy ending. Ding goes to the US for further studies and then embarks on a successful academic career. She is involved in the development of the atomic bomb, but becomes the target of political persecution after she publicly denounces the merits of this invention. After a prison sentence and an adventurous journey home via Europe, in 1959 her return to China is celebrated. In the meantime, Su had lost contact with her. During the war, he worked underground for the CCP and likewise became a successful scientist, devoting his talents and efforts to the cause of the CCP. He finally gave in to his father's wishes, married Ye Yuhan and in 1959 considers himself a contented husband and a father of two. Ding's return causes him emotional turmoil—and finding him married likewise causes her pain, given that she has turned down all her suitors as her heart solely belongs to Su. She decides to leave Beijing and work at a research base in the south-west of the country. Only the appearance of Zhou Enlai at her farewell at the airport convinces her to change her mind, and from then on, all three—Ding, Su, and Ye—work in Beijing, uniting their efforts for the well-being of the nation.

Four elements in this plot resounded particularly well with contemporary readers, prompting the wide circulation of the text and the ensuing persecution of its author. First, its contents and style position *The Second Handshake* within the Cultural Revolution *shouchaoben* tradition. As in the stories discussed above, the plot involves the elements of espionage, the pre-1949 underground struggle of the CCP, and romantic love. Second, with his text the author pleads for a re-evaluation of the status of science and scientists, which represents a turning away from ideology as the sole criterion to assess human behaviour, as practised during the Cultural Revolution. Third, the plot represents a turn toward romantic love and individual desires. While most *zhiqing* were deprived of the possibility of romantic love[40] and had to subordinate their emotional needs to the requirements of the collective and the demands of the Party, the novel describes three protagonists striving for love.

The triangular nature of this love story further complicates the issue: as the characters strive for their personal well-being, the setting results in everyone's feelings being hurt. The characters, first and foremost the male protagonist Su Guanlan, are ambiguous. They want to serve the nation and they want to strive for scientific progress. However, Su is sometimes indecisive and does not quite know how to deal with his emotions, or how to resist his father in order to be united with Ding. Su is the hero of the story: In his youth he bravely saved Ding

40 Bonnin, *The Lost Generation*, pp. 319–26. While propaganda, puritan morals and threats of punishment dominated, Pan Yihong paints a more diverse picture, with a number of *zhiqing* finding (and staying with) their partner for life. Yihong Pan, *Tempered in the Revolutionary Furnace*, pp. 181–203.

and strove for his ideals. But he is an ambivalent hero who also has emotional needs. This, of course, contrasts sharply with heroes in the official literature, where characters were drawn in clear black-and-white-demarcations.[41] As such, the story may be regarded as foreshadowing later literary trends such as Scar Literature or the works of Zhang Jie.

Fourth, the prominence given to Zhou Enlai stands in stark contrast to the official Mao cult. While it is not uncommon in socialist realist fiction that a real person from the political centre appears as a *deus ex machina*, according to Cultural Revolutionary conventions this would have to be Mao Zedong. Zhou, however, represented the antithesis of the radicalism of Cultural Revolution policies and therefore enjoyed considerable support. In the *Plum Blossom* texts Zhou Enlai also appeared in lieu of Mao, but there the authors carefully subordinated him to the unquestioned ideological authority of the Chairman. Zhang Yang later paid dearly for the prominence he accorded to Zhou in the story.

(Re)Writing Shouchaoben *in the 1960s and 1970s*

Zhang Yang's (re)writing of this story is closely tied to the conditions in the literary field during the 1960s and 1970s. Being aware that his story would not be published, he wrote it for his own enjoyment and for that of his friends, among whom the text first circulated. Zhang based it on the real-life story of his uncle, a scientist who had experienced a similar 'triangle'.[42] Between 1963 and 1979 Zhang Yang rewrote the story multiple times and this was not merely due to his own creative impulse. Rather, circulation necessitated a constant rewriting of the text as the manuscripts never returned to their author.[43] Over the course of time, the contents of the story were modified and the story enlarged, while the title of the story changed several times. A version produced by Zhang Yang in 1974 seems to have circulated particularly widely. This text constituted the basis for Zhang's 1979 version, which was then published as a book. Comparison of one of the 1974 versions and the published book confirms this derivation. There are a number of scenes and details which only occur in one or other of the texts, but there are also other scenes in which identical wording is employed, especially for direct speech.[44]

The scale of circulation and of his readers' creativity became apparent to Zhang in 1971. Shortly after his first release from prison for allegations unrelated to *The Second Handshake*, he was sitting at a campfire where his friends were sharing gossip, rumours and stories. One of these stories turned out to be Zhang's story, albeit under a different title. Zhang silently

41 Both Cultural Revolution *shouchaoben* literature and underground poetry confronted and modified the image of the hero as propagated in official literature, see Lena Henningsen/Sara Landa: Verliebte Helden, rebellische Dichter und das 'Erwachen des Selbst-Bewusstseins': Heldenstilisierung in der chinesischen Literatur der langen 1970er Jahre. *helden. heroes. héros.* 3:2 (2015), pp. 15–29.

42 Zhang Yang, *Di er ci woshou wenziyu*, pp. 39–48.

43 *Ibid*., p. 63.

44 (Zhang Yang 张扬): *Di er ci woshou* 第二次握手, anonymous Cultural Revolution hand-copied manuscript in the author's collection, 1974). Cf: Zhang Yang, *Di er ci woshou*.

listened as his fellow *zhiqing* asked each other who was familiar with the story, what was the title of the story and the identity of the author.[45] Circulation of the manuscript had evidently modified the text and its meaning. Both *The Return* (the title under which the story was known during the early and mid-1970s) as well as *The Second Handshake* (the title of the final publication) were coined by readers of the story and accepted by the author. Each title emphasizes a different element of the story, thus presenting a slightly different interpretation: *The Return* stresses a patriotic element and shifts emphasis onto the female protagonist, while *The Second Handshake* accentuates the love story and its ambivalent ending. Yet another title, *Qingdan zhi mu* 氢弹之母 (The mother of the H-bomb), lays emphasis on scientific progress (as well as on the ambivalence it may entail). The different conjectures about the identity of the author also mirror different perceptions and interpretations of the story. Is he an American? Is he from Hong Kong? Is he the son of a high-ranking cadre?[46] Not knowing that the true author of the story was sitting among them, the *zhiqing* made various assumptions which attributed special credibility either to the scientific elements in the plot, to descriptions of foreign countries, or to high-level politics.

Zhang Yang's fate was closely linked to that of his text, not least because of his imprisonment. The interrogations to which he was subjected also served to shape his vision of himself as an author and to preserve and circulate the text. After all, in preparation for struggle sessions, students were provided with copies of the text in order to write accusations; Li Haichu, the judge entrusted with the case (and otherwise not interested in literature), read copies of the text and then wisely delayed the case to save Zhang's life; also thanks to the investigations, a number of copies of the text were preserved. The investigations thus had an unintended participatory aspect to them. Moreover, faced with counterrevolutionary charges levelled against him and with investigators lacking any literary education, Zhang honed his literary views. While in the beginning it had been 'just a story' to him, he later became confident that he had produced a literary work of significance[47] and was determined to fight for it: '*The Return* is a good work! As long as I live, I will talk about it, will write, paint, propagate and call it good!'[48]

Production, Circulation and Consumption of Shouchaoben in the Cultural Revolution's Aftermath

The circulation of *The Second Handshake* continued after the fall of the Gang of Four in 1976. Zhang Yang was still imprisoned in Changsha at the time.[49] From October 1975 until shortly after the death of Mao, interrogations were interrupted, but then continued as it was decided

45 Zhang Yang, *Di er ci woshou wenziyu*, pp. 30–32.
46 *Ibid*., p. 32.
47 *Ibid*., p. 71.
48 *Ibid*., p. 199.
49 Only after his release, did Zhang learn that years before Mao Zedong's second wife had been kept prisoner in exactly the same cell before her execution. *Ibid*., pp. 418–20.

to bring the trial to an end.[50] Zhang continued to oppose the allegations levelled against him by writing complaints and by going on a hunger strike.[51] Due to the length of his imprisonment, the poor conditions and malnourishment, his health deteriorated.[52] Even though the tone of the interrogations had changed, Zhang was still facing the possibility of a death sentence. Luckily Li Haichu, the prudent judge, kept delaying the trial. In December 1977 Hu Yaobang became the head of the CCP Organization Department and one year later, with the Third Plenary of the Eleventh Central Committee, the rehabilitation of —or correction of verdicts against—cadres and ordinary citizens began.[53] Zhang's case received attention as readers of his text began sending letters to editors at China Youth Publishing Group 中国青年出版社 and the *China Youth Daily* 中国青年报 demanding an investigation into the case of the author of *The Second Handshake*. Overwhelmed by the sheer number of letters, two journalists started to look into the identity and whereabouts of Zhang and travelled to Changsha. They attended the interrogations and pressed the investigators to have Zhang rehabilitated so that he would be able to publish his novel. As with his imprisonment, it took the intervention of a high-level politician, Hu Yaobang, to finally bring about his rehabilitation and release on January 18, 1979.[54] The news of this brought in even more readers' letters demanding the rapid publication of the book.[55]

Zhang Yang was briefly united with his mother and sister, then travelled to Beijing in order to write his story once more and prepare it for publication. However, he would spend the next 15 months in hospital, being treated for tuberculosis. With the assistance of the staff of the publishing house, he wrote the story again, and the book was published in July 1979. Circulation reached unprecedented levels: With 4.3 million copies sold over the next decade the book became an instant bestseller, representing the publisher's most successful fiction publication after the end of the Cultural Revolution.[56] It was soon adapted into a movie and translations into four minority languages, as well as into Japanese, followed.[57] Moreover, a number of publishing houses produced comic book adaptations (*lianhuanhua* 连环画). Of these, most are based on drawings and one uses stills from the movie.[58] At least two of these change the order of narration, dropping flashbacks and telling the story in the order of events

50 *Ibid*., p 194.
51 *Ibid*., p. 210.
52 *Ibid*., p. 209.
53 Daniel Leese: Revising Political Verdicts in Post-Mao China: The Case of Beijing's Fengtai District. In: Jeremy Brown, Matthew D. Johnson (eds): *Maoism at the Grassroots: Everyday Life in China's Era of High Socialism.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2015, pp. 102–28.
54 Zhang Yang, *Di er ci woshou wenziyu*, pp. 312–15.
55 *Ibid*., p. 331.
56 *Ibid*., pp. 376–78.
57 *Ibid*., pp. 378–79, pp. 383–84.
58 Zhang Yang 张扬: *Di er ci woshou* 第二次握手 (adapted by Wu Huiming 吴慧明). Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe 1981.

as they happened.[59] While most were published in the early 1980s, one copy was first printed in 2007[60], using images from a 1980 book[61] with slightly modified captions. *The Second Handshake* thus turned from an underground publication into a regular publication and, what is more, into a major success. In autumn 1979, together with Wang Meng, Deng Youmei, Liu Xinwu, Jia Pingwa and Zhang Jie, Zhang Yang was among 452 newly admitted members of the Chinese Writers Association and formally became an author with a monthly salary.

This achievement, however, also revealed the deficiencies of the newly emerging commercial market. The commercial success of his work notwithstanding, Zhang Yang did not become a rich man because of the low earnings from the royalty payment system. Moreover, the *lianhuanhua* books were produced without his consent, authorization or even knowlede—and without due financial compensation for him. The producers of the translations into minority languages did not even bother to send him copies of the book. To Zhang this epitomizes the inadequacies of the system. Likewise, the success brings to light the fact that distribution was patchy, especially in more remote areas. Demand exceeded supply and copies of the book would be sold out before rural youth had a chance to reach a bookstore. So they would resort to a well-known tactic, as one of them complained in a letter cited by Zhang: 'There was no alternative but for "hand-copies" to appear again. Of course, hand-copying takes time and care, but what else could we do!'[62] The circulation of hand-copied manuscripts thus continued, albeit for different reasons and in a different context.

Continuity and Change

The Cultural Revolution brought about abrupt and often traumatic change in the lives of individuals, in Chinese society and in literary production. In its style, content and practice, however, the literary practice of the Cultural Revolution in general, and *shouchaoben* literature in particular, also demonstrate continuity with earlier and later literary practice. *Shouchaoben* literature continued earlier literary traditions while at the same time modifying these, just as it anticipated later developments.

In his early study of *shouchaoben*, Perry Link has pointed out their indebtedness to the heritage of Republican China's entertainment literature.[63] Moreover, *shouchaoben* fiction is

59 Zhang Yang 张扬: *Di er ci woshou* 第二次握手 (adapted by Nan Lin 楠林). Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe 1981. Zhang Yang 张扬: *Di er ci woshou* 第二次握手 (adapted by Kuang Xiayu 邝夏谕, Li Yingru 李硬儒). Tianjin: Tianjin renmin meishu chubanshe 1980.

60 Zhang Yang 张扬: *Di er ci woshou* 第二次握手 (adapted by Liu Jie 刘洁). Tianjin: Tianjin renmin meishu chubanshe 2007.

61 Zhang Yang 张扬: *Di er ci woshou* 第二次握手 (adapted by Zhao Jian 赵剑). Baojishi: Shaanxi renmin meishu chubanshe 1980.

62 Zhang Yang, *Di er ci woshou wenziyu*, p. 370.

63 Link, Hand-Copied Entertainment Fiction from the Cultural Revolution, p. 20.

shaped by the legacy of socialist realist fiction of the early years of the PRC. As can be seen from the stories discussed here, most do not constitute an outright expression of dissent. Rather, they aim at entertaining their readers, at the same time providing them with the possibility of reflecting real life experiences. The overall political and ideological outline of the stories is in line with socialist realist fiction: no matter what their profession, the heroes devote themselves to the cause of the revolution (or the nation), risking their health, or even their lives. These heroes follow the model of socialist realism in their unswerving commitment. However, *shouchaoben* authors modified the model by adding ambivalence. Some of their characters waver, exhibiting emotions other than devotion to Mao and the revolutionary cause. One even resists the CCP's call to follow the GMD to Taiwan in 1949 to work as a secret agent there, and stays in Beijing with his beloved family.[64]

Some texts represent a reflection of aspects of life during the Cultural Revolution. Yet, they do not call into question the authority of the Party, or the prerogative of the individual to employ all of his (or her) efforts to fight for the well-being of the nation. Even in *Open Love Letters*[65], which contains criticism of the cult of Mao, the protagonists cling to this. Only Bei Dao's *Bodong* 波动 (Waves) represents a break with this tradition in its description of corrupt Party cadres and disillusioned young people who do not identify with the collective any more.[66]

The modifications of (and in Bei Dao's case the break with) literary predecessors point to future literary developments anticipated in *shouchaoben* literature. Underground poetry and literary salons were crucial for the development of obscure poetry[67], and unofficial magazines had an impact on the 1978 democracy movement in Beijing.[68] However, *shouchaoben* fiction also impacted later developments. In their more nuanced treatment of emotional needs they foreshadowed topics that would later be discussed in scar literature or *zhiqing* literature.[69] Like these, some of the *shouchaoben* spell out the ills inflicted upon individuals through the policy of the Cultural Revolution as well as the legitimacy of striving for fulfilment of the individual's desires. Neither of these, though, call for an open break with the system.

64 Zhang Jianjun 张建军: *Yinhuise de lingdai* 银灰色的领带. Hohot: Neimenggu renmin chubanshe 2001, p. 85.

65 Jin Fan, *Open Love Letters*, pp. 4–67.

66 Zhao Zhenkai 赵振开 (Bei Dao 北岛): *Bodong* 波动. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press 1985.

67 Hong Zicheng: *A History of Contemporary Chinese Literature*, trans. by Michael M. Day. Leiden: Brill 2007, p. 336. *Open Love Letters* also contains a number of poems in which the characters voice dissent—and which break with stylistic patterns of Maoist poetry. See: Hennigsen/Landa, Verliebte Helden, rebellische Dichter und das 'Erwachen des Selbst-Bewussteins'.

68 Jiang Shao: *Citizen Publications before the Internet*. New York: Palgrave McMillan 2015, pp. 83–128.

69 *Zhiqing* literature has received less attention than scar literature. Guo Xiaodong defines it broadly as literature written by (former) *zhiqing* about *zhiqing* life. With such a broad definition, it encompasses or overlaps with other literary developments such as scar literature or the later *xungen* literature. Guo Xiaodong 郭小东: *Zhongguo zhiqing wenxue shigao* 中国知青文学史稿. Beijing: Beijing shiyue wenyi chubanshe 2012.

Shouchaoben thus continued earlier literary traditions, contents and styles and brought about incremental change to these. A periodization of Chinese literary history that speaks primarily of rupture or break thus needs to be reconsidered; illegal publishing activities likewise preceded the Cultural Revolution.[70] *Shouchaoben* as well as underground literary practices in general influenced and were intertwined with later developments in the Chinese book market. A number of *shouchaoben* found their way into official publishing, most notably and most successfully *The Second Handshake*. The publication and re-publication of *shouchaoben* (or of novels marketed as such) continues to this day, which testifies to the commercial potential attested to these stories. However, while the publishing industry started resuming business in the early 1970s, even by the end of the decade it had not yet fully normalized. A commercial market only slowly took shape. The internal publication system continued. Between 1975 and 1977, 15% of all published matter originated from the system.[71] These *huangpi* and *huipi* publications were influential, both in terms of intellectual input[72] and in terms of providing translations that would then be published officially.[73] Reading matter was apparently still scarce, and the number of books delivered to bookstores did not suffice to meet the demands of the readership, so readers had no choice but to resort to copying extant *shouchaoben* and to producing new *shouchaoben* from printed matter.

The case of *The Second Handshake* demonstrated the disproportion between demand and supply. Zhang Yang had already noted the existence of unauthorized adaptations of his novel. As the Chinese book market turned into a bestseller market during the 1990s, the publication of unauthorized titles would continue. A veritable black market for books came into being selling censored books, the latest bestsellers, unauthorized (but very rapid!) translations of foreign bestsellers such as the *Harry Potter* series, as well as 'fake' books penned by unknown writers and sold under the name of famous established authors such as Han Han or J.K. Rowling.[74] Moreover, complex institutional change and differentiation would result in a second channel of book publication where official, un-official and semi-official agents cooperate[75]—and add to the black market several markets shaded in varying degrees of grey.

70 Matthew D. Johnson: Beneath the Propaganda State: Official and Unofficial Cultural Landscapes in Shanghai, 1949–1965. In: Jeremy Brown, Matthew D. Johnson (eds): *Maoism at the Grassroots: Everyday Life in China's Era of High Socialism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2015, pp. 199–229.

71 Jiang Huajie 蒋华杰/Liu Yang 刘阳: Lengzhan beijing xia Xin Zhongguo neibu faxing zhidu de yanbian yu yingxiang 冷战背景下新中国内部发行制度的演变与影响. *Zhonggongdangshi Yanjiu* 5 (2013), pp. 35–44, p. 41.

72 Song Yongyi, *Wenge zhong de huangpishu he huipishu*, pp. 59-64. Jiang Huajie/Liu Yang, Lengzhan beijing xia Xin Zhongguo, pp. 41–44.

73 Shuyu Kong: For Reference Only: Restricted Publication and Distribution of Foreign Literature during the Cultural Revolution. *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art* 2 (2002), pp. 76–85, p. 84.

74 Lena Henningsen: *Copyright Matters: Imitation, Creativity and Authenticity in Contemporary Chinese Literature*. Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag 2010.

75 Shuyu Kong: *Consuming Literature. Best Sellers and the Commercialization of Literary Production in Contemporary China.* Stanford: Stanford University Press 2005, pp. 64–94.

Taking into account the commercial development, *shouchaoben* practices thus point to an aspect of continuity: In Chinese book culture, the official and the unofficial exist alongside each other. The reasons for this may vary and be political, ideological, social or commercial. However, these official and unofficial worlds of reading mutually influence and complement each other. As a consequence, at times institutional change is brought about in the publishing sector[76] and larger sections of the population attain the possibility to participate in intellectual, literary and entertaining literary practices.

Cultural Revolution *shouchaoben* stand in a tradition of illegal, underground publishing, circulation and consumption of reading matter. This underground aspect represents yet another aspect of continuity during the Cultural Revolution. In many of the stories, the 'glorious' underground struggle of the CCP prior to 1949 is touched upon or makes up an important part of the characters' past. This component on the one hand links the text to socialist realist literature from the years preceding the Cultural Revolution: novels like *Hong yan* 红岩 (Red crag) or *Qingchun zhi ge* 青春之歌 (The song of youth) narrate the conflicts of war and civil war and portray the CCP heroes who struggle underground.[77] On the other hand, this component allows for a reading with relation to the Cultural Revolution—the time when the *shouchaoben* were produced, circulated and read. Readers and authors of *shouchaoben* were forced into illegal, underground reading and writing. They believed in the significance of their literary and intellectual endeavours just as the socialist realist heroes believed in the righteousness of their own underground activities. These descriptions may thus be read as a comment on, or an evaluation of, underground literary activities of the Cultural Revolution, attributing a similar heroic status to readers and authors as to the literary characters in the texts. Historical and literary developments after the Cultural Revolution proved this verdict correct, at least in a certain respect. Had it not been for these daring readers and authors, the literary field of the early reform era would have seen less diversity and less open discussion of a broad variety of issues.

76 *Ibid*., p. 94.

77 Luo Guangbin 罗广斌/Yang Yiyan 杨益言: *Hong yan* 红岩. Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe 1961. Yang Mo 杨沫: *Qingchun zhi ge* 青春之歌. Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe 1962.

IV
Bestsellers and a New Generation of Writers in Post-socialist China, 1997–2016

6
A View of China's Literary Landscape: Interview with Sheng Yun, Woman Editor of the *Shanghai Review of Books*

Daria Berg and Rui Kunze

Editors' note: Sheng Yun 盛韵 is an assistant research professor at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences and a contributing editor at *Shanghai shuping* 上海书评 (Shanghai review of books). She graduated from Fudan University in 2008 with a doctoral degree in Chinese classics. Her thesis was entitled 'Texts from Early China under Modern Scrutiny'. She has translated several books on classical music, including Harold C. Schonberg's *The Great Conductors* (1967) and Norman Lebrecht's *The Book of Musical Anecdotes* (1985), and is currently translating Clive James' *Cultural Amnesia* (2007). She has been on the panel of judges for the Irish Literature Translation Prize since 2014 and is a member of the standing committee of the Shanghai International Literary Week for the Shanghai Book Fair. She occasionally writes for the *London Review of Books*.

Kodex: We would be interested to hear about the *Shanghai Review of Books*. How did it come into being, and what role does the *Shanghai Review of Books* play in public life and academic circles? What are your duties there, and what do you think are its prospects for the future?

Sheng: The *Shanghai Review of Books* was launched as the Sunday literary supplement of the daily newspaper *Dongfang zaobao* 东方早报 (Oriental morning post). It was founded in 2008 by Lu Hao 陆灏 (b. 1963), the senior editor of *Wenhui bao* 文汇报 (Wenhui daily) and a former editor of the magazine *Wanxiang* 万象 (Panorama monthly). The idea is to offer Chinese readers what the *New York Review of Books*, the *London Review of Books* and *The Times Literary Supplement* have been providing for American, British and Anglophone readers for years. We discuss a wide variety of topics at length and in depth, and the opinions voiced are supported with elaborate arguments. I believe that the *Shanghai Review of Books* fills a gap in our intellectual life, making abstruse academic issues accessible, provoking debate, disseminating the latest academic discoveries, and occasionally delivering severe critiques that help readers identify particularly bad books. My job includes commissioning reviews and essays, interviewing scholars and writers for cover stories, and translating articles from our foreign contributors, such as Ian Buruma, Norman Lebrecht, Colm Toibin, Mary-Kay Wilmers, Toby Lichtig, etc. And with regard to your last question, I wish I had a crystal ball and could predict what is likely to happen on the stock market, or what the future holds for the publishing industry!

Anything could happen in China, and as people like to say, good things don't last forever. But what I *can* say is that as long as the *Shanghai Review of Books* exists, we will try to bring our readers the best.

Kodex: Do you see Shanghai as a cosmopolitan city? Does the *Shanghai Review of Books* have anything to do with—or contribute to—Shanghai's cosmopolitanism?

Sheng: There is no doubt that Shanghai is one of the most international cities in China and in Asia. We would, however, be even more 'cosmopolitan' if we had access to Google, Twitter or YouTube, were allowed dual nationality, and had less air pollution. Like all port cities in the world, people here are open to new things and ideas. Perhaps that's why we have the *Shanghai Review of Books* instead of a *Beijing Review of Books*. Our readership covers Greater China, and as far as I know, quite a few sinologists from North America and Britain make a point of reading the *Shanghai Review of Books* online every week.

Kodex: What does globalisation mean for China's publishing industry? Could you give us some examples to illustrate your opinion?

Sheng: Globaliation means many things, but if we limit it to the publishing industry, it means playing by international rules. Before China became a signatory to the Universal Copyright Convention in 1992, Chinese presses published large numbers of unauthorized works, including *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. When Garcia Marquez found this out he decided never to authorize any publication of his works in China. Only when his agent Carmen Balcells got into financial difficulties a few years ago did a Chinese book company called Thinkingdom Media Group Ltd. (Xin jingdian wenhua gufen youxian gongsi 新经典文化股份有限公司) get the chance to buy the copyright of his book. Of course, they paid a huge sum—rumour had it that they paid over a million dollars. So 'globalisation' only has an impact on the foreign literature market. When no foreign authors or agencies are involved, China is also a self-sufficient market where local rules prevail, which sometimes may mean no rules at all.

Kodex: In what ways does globalisation affect your life as an editor and as a researcher?

Sheng: Being a literary editor is a delicate job, as one has to know how to handle writers, and doing research on other people's work also requires a great deal of sensibility and understanding. I also try to learn from other cultures at every opportunity. I try to put myself into the shoes of others, although that often turns out to be more difficult than it sounds.

Kodex: These days there are many literary works moving from the Internet into print and other mass media (e.g. TV series, films). These include, for example, *Luohun* 裸婚 (Naked wedding, 2010), *Fuchen* 浮沉 (Fluctuations, 2008) and relationship advice books by Lian Yue 连岳 (*alias* Zhong Xiaoyong, 钟晓勇, b. 1970), Wu Ang 巫昂 (*alias* Chen Yuhong 陈宇红, b. 1974) and Muzi Mei 木子美 (*alias* Li Li 李丽, b. 1978). Could you explain why such transmediality (*kua meijie* 跨媒介) is so

popular? What does it mean for China's cultural production in terms of economic profit, social impact, and creative originality?

Sheng: I wouldn't really describe any of those books as literary works. They are commercial, targeting a mass audience. Once they prove to be successful, they are turned into a variety of media products. Literary works don't usually sell well in China. The only recent success has been Jin Yucheng's 金宇澄 masterpiece *Fanhua* 繁花 (Blossoms), which makes ample use of Shanghainese dialect. Its first draft was shared chapter by chapter on an online forum of the local website Nongtang wang 弄堂网 in 2011. A separate edition of the whole novel came out in 2013 and won the Mao Dun Literature Prize in 2015. Now Wong Kar-Wai has purchased the film rights. I think it's only natural for commercial authors to learn Internet marketing skills or seek opportunities in the film industry in order to maximize the cash-flow from their works. But for literary writers, these could be fatal distractions. Literature is fundamentally the art of language, which is in opposition to the simplicity, or indeed brutality, of Internet culture or the visually-based TV series or film.

Kodex: What kind of relationships do social media such as blogs, Weibo and Wechat have with the publishing industry?

Sheng: Nowadays every major publishing house has its own Weibo and Wechat platform to promote its books and post news updates. In the past, readers just consumed whatever publishing houses fed them through newsletters, but nowadays they have much more choice, so the publishers have to work very hard to produce tailor-made book events to attract target readers. Wechat has full e-commerce functions that enable consumers to buy books.

Kodex: What are the relationships between Internet publications, ebooks, and print publications? How do the companies involved relate to, integrate into, or compete with one another?

Sheng: When we talk about China's publishing industry, we mean the legitimate publishing houses which have an ISBN licence (*shuhao* 书号) to print physical books. Officially recognised ebooks are popular with neither publishers nor readers. Most ebooks online are pirated versions. There are grey areas such as 'Douban 豆瓣[1] original ebooks', where unestablished writers can publish their works and readers pay a small fee (as little as RMB 0.99 per title) to access them. If a work appears to become popular, Douban will act as an agent to find a publishing house for the author.

Kodex: : Do you think the rise of Internet literature or ebooks indicates or is a precursor to the demise of printed books? How does censorship apply to them? Are there any differences?

1 Douban is a SNS (social networking service) site, where users review books, films, music, live performances, etc.

Sheng: Only officially recognised publishing houses have the right to publish ebooks—for which they already have a print version. Most of them choose not to do so for the following reasons: first, ebooks yield less profit but are easily pirated; and second, the sales of ebooks may reduce those of the print version. People have been talking about the demise of books for a long time, but since books are 'antifragile'—to use Nassim N. Taleb's term—they have survived so far. In the West, ebook sales do not necessarily eat into the sales of physical books. In my view, there are no evident links between the rise of one and the demise of the other. Internet literature in China is another issue. Most of it can safely be assessed as 'junk', with writers easily churning out 50,000 to 60,000 characters a day. It doesn't matter whether it is produced in digital or physical form. But for the censors, online content is easier to monitor, because this tedious task can be outsourced to machines, for example by using a list of sensitive words.

Kodex: How is sexuality treated in China's publishing industry and cultural products? What aspects are censored, and why and how is this done?

Sheng: The standard is somewhat elastic, depending on individual cases. Some newspapers wouldn't publish LGBT-related content while others would. Some literary works with 'obscene' or 'erotic' parts get published, while others are expurgated. No publisher in mainland China, however, would dare to touch *Fifty Shades of Grey*, because of its notoriety. Keep it low key, and you'll probably be ignored by the censors; make too much noise, and they could come down on you like a ton of bricks.

Kodex: What role does gender play in the publishing industry? For example, for you as a woman editor or for other women writers that you know, does gender make you different from your male colleagues?

Sheng: The publishing industry is probably one of those that don't have many gender issues. Women editors outnumber, and in many cases outshine, their male counterparts, and there are many institutional women's organizations and social groups promoting women's writings or feminist studies. Probably in the future it will be male editors seeking preferential treatment!

Kodex: What do you think of commercial publishers and their interpretation(s) of the socialist/revolutionary tradition? For example, Sanlian 三联 and its publication of the book *Lei Feng 1940–1962* 雷锋 1942–1962 (Lei Feng Spirit, 2006; 2nd edition 2012)?

Sheng: Since I haven't come across that category of books, I can't comment on it. Of course, many publishing houses receive funds to publish books propagating 'socialist values'. What I am certain of is that Sanlian is respected in the trade as well as by readers. It has earned this respect not for its 'red' books, but for publishing the works of Qian Mu 钱穆 (1895–1990), Chen Yinque 陈寅恪 (1890–1969), Yu Yingshi 余英时 (b. 1930), Lin Da 林达 (pseudonym for husband and wife team Ding Hongfu

丁鸿富 and Li Xiaolin 李晓琳, both b. 1952), Stephen Owen (b. 1946) and the *Dushu* 读书 (Reading) magazine, especially between 1986 and 1996.

Kodex: What are the most popular media among China's reading audience—print, mobile phone, iPad, computer, or something else?

Sheng: It's hard for me to answer that question, because I have no extensive data on it—and I doubt whether any reliable data exists, anyway. My impression is that many people use all the formats you mentioned to read. Reading is a habit, and for those who read, formats probably don't matter that much.

Kodex: What age group(s) and social group(s) constitute the largest readership for China's publishing industry in general?

Sheng: This is also hard to tell with any precision. The children's book market seems to be as big as the market for health guides. Books about love and romance targeting school-girls can sell as well as how-to-get-rich titles targeting wannabe millionaires.

Kodex: What role does the publishing industry play in shaping China's youth culture? For example, how would you assess the position of cultural entrepreneurs such as Guo Jingming 郭敬明 (b. 1983) in the publishing landscape?

Sheng: I think youth culture in China is basically a fan culture, though I'm not an expert on this. Whoever becomes an idol—whether they are a writer, pop singer, pianist, actor, etc.—will have a large fan base. Guo Jingming is certainly a very successful entrepreneur, and a very shrewd one. After he became an idol himself, he contracted a group of young writers to produce novels, magazines and cartoons for his fans—most of whom are schoolgirls. As long as schoolgirls want to read stories about princes on white horses, dramatic friendships, alluring vampires, or love, Guo's empire will continue to thrive and feed them such stories and animations. He should be treated as a businessman rather than a cultural figure.

Kodex: How would you assess the roles of online bookstores and traditional bookstores in selling books and other published cultural products?

Sheng: As online bookstores are struggling with heavy discounts to attract buyers while traditional bookstores are dying in China, a new model of bookstores is appearing. The Japanese design giant Muji (Wuyin liangpin 無印良品) has just opened its flagship bookstore on Huaihai Road in Shanghai; Eslite bookstore (Chengpin shudian 诚品书店) from Taiwan has opened a new store in Suzhou and will soon be opening one in Shanghai Pudong, and The-MIX-PLACE by Fangsuo bookstore (Fangsuo shudian 方所书店) has opened a business on Hengshan Road in Shanghai. These bookstores combine the sale of books with that of designer gifts, stationery, and decorative arts, while also having cafés and dining facilities. What they are offering is lifestyle concepts. They attract trendy young people who think books could be a decorative part of their lives.

Kodex: What are the most popular book genre(s) circulating on the market in China at the moment? Could you give us some examples?

Sheng: Textbooks, health guides, travel guides, the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series and get-rich-quick titles. In 2005, Johanna Basford's *Secret Garden: An Inky Treasure Hunt and Colouring Book* sold more than 1.5 million copies. I'm sorry if I've left anything out—I haven't been paying much attention to popular books.

Kodex: Are there still unofficial (print) publications in China? If there are, what and where are they?

Sheng: That's not something I'm supposed to know, is it? But occasionally I do come across articles such as Ian Johnson's recent piece, 'China's Brave Underground Journal'.[2]

Kodex: What differences are there between state-owned publishers and commercial publishers?

Sheng: All publishing houses in China are commercial now, since they no longer receive full subsidies. And all publishers are subject to the Press and Publication Bureau, which is managed by the Propaganda Department. What is worth noting is that there are many independent book companies, such as Shanghai 99 (JiuJiu dushuren 九久读书人), Sanhui Books (Sanhui tushu 三辉图书), Hinabook (Houlang 后浪, and the Thinkingdom Media Group which I mentioned before. They don't have ISBN licences to publish books so they have to work with officially recognised publishing houses. Usually these publishing houses provide ISBN, while the independent book companies plan titles, purchase rights, find translators, and deliver the proofs to the publishing house for final review. In many cases, book companies distribute the books, invest in advertising and receive most of the profits. This means that publishing houses can make money simply by selling ISBN licences, which cost around 20,000 RMB each, at no risk to themselves at all.

Kodex: What factors affect the creation of a bestseller chart? For example, literary prizes, foreign translations, informal 'rent-a-crowd' buying campaigns—as you revealed in the *London Review of Books* in 2014?[3] And how 'new' are they, in fact?

Sheng: In the past, the bestseller charts were simple. A bookstore could have its own chart to tell people which books had sold most during the previous week or month. Nowadays in our digital era, it is getting harder and harder to tell how real these charts truly are. Startup online video companies will pay for clicks/views to create an illusion of popularity. Weibo celebrities have tens of millions of followers but most of them are so-called 'zombies'—machine-generated aliases. The makers of bad movies can mislead public opinion by hiring ghost writers and reviewers online—the so-called I Internet Water Army (*wangluo shuijun* 网络水军)—to hype a film. Publishers can do the same with bestseller charts. With almost nothing

2 Ian Johnson: China's Brave Underground Journal. *The New York Review of Books*, 4 December 2014. http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2014/12/04/chinas-brave-underground-journal/ (10 May 2016.)

3 Sheng Yun: Shortcuts. *The London Review of Books*, 3 April 2014. http://www.lrb.co.uk/v36/n07/-shengyun/short-cuts (11 July 2016).

but junk books in the bestseller charts, I wonder how much real influence they can have and how long they will last.

Kodex: If possible, could you give us some examples of the most authoritative bestseller charts in China?

Sheng: There are some companies specializing in bestseller charts, such as Openbook.com.cn, Dangdang.cn, Amazon.cn that also have their own bestseller charts. But I can't vouch for their authority. My personal suggestion is: forget about the bestseller charts, because they lead you nowhere.

Kodex: How do international publishers such as Penguin and Harpers choose Chinese works for translation and publication?

Sheng: I won't speculate how foreign publishers work, but there are several key players in the game. For example, Taiwan literary agent Gary Tan (Tan Guanglei 谭光磊), who started out as a sub-agent for foreign literary agencies, now represents many Chinese writers such as Chi Zijian 迟子建 (b. 1964), Mai Jia 麦家 (*alias* Jiang Benhu 蒋本浒, b. 1964), and Liu Zhenyun 刘震云 (b. 1958), and has sold their novels to major foreign publishing houses.[4] The Hong Kong-based Peony Literary Agency represents Han Han 韩寒 (b. 1982), A Yi 阿乙(*alias* Ai Guozhu 艾国柱, b. 1976), Chan Koonchung (Chen Guanzhong 陈冠中, b. 1952), Su Tong 苏童 (b. 1963), Wang Anyi 王安忆 (b. 1954), Yan Geling 严歌苓 (b. 1958), and so on.[5] Shanghai 99 has brought some of the best Western authors to Chinese readers over the years, and sold Xiao Bai's 小白 (*alias* Zhang Haibo 张海波, b. 1968) *Zujie* 租界 (French concession) to HarperCollins US.[6] The website Paper Republic is also a very important force promoting contemporary Chinese literature.[7] It began in 2007 as a forum for translators of Chinese literature to share information but has developed into an organization and platform building literary and publishing connections between China and the rest of the world. It provides a list of active translators of Chinese literature and insights into what is new and what is worth translating or publishing.

Kodex: How do Chinese publishers choose foreign works, have them translated, and advertise them?

Sheng: Many Chinese literary editors read extensively and keep a close watch on new books in foreign countries. Of course an easier way is to find a good book scout who regularly provides information relevant to your interests. After a Chinese publisher decides to introduce a foreign book, they will find an agency such as Big Apple to

4 Gary Tan: The Greyhawk Agency. Publisher's Marketplace. http://www.publishersmarketplace.com/members/Grayhawk/ (11 July 2016).

5 Peony Literary Agency website. http://www.peonyliteraryagency.com/about.php. (11 July 2016).

6 Paper Republic: Shanghai 99 Readers: Building International Ties. https://paper-republic.org/news/newsitems/174/ (11 July 2016).

7 Paper Republic website: https://paper-republic.org/ (11 July 2016).

purchase the rights and then look for an appropriate translator. If the book has bestselling potential or literary merit, the publisher will invest in advertisements in newspapers, on websites or even on commercial billboards. Commissioning some good reviews always helps. The best thing is when the author can come to China and do a book tour. This means not just book signings and speeches at cultural events, but also whipping up media excitement about—and hence publicity for—the author and his/her works.

7
The Formation of Reading Communities: An Analysis of Bestsellers in Post-Socialist China

Winnie L M Yee

Introduction: Publishing and Censorship

On 10 January 2016 thousands of protesters rallied in Hong Kong, demanding the release of five booksellers who were believed to be detained on the Mainland. The mysterious disappearance of Lee Bo, a local bookseller whose company 'drew the ire of the Chinese Communist Party after publishing gossipy works on the private lives of Beijing leaders',[1] has gained international attention. In early 2012 Lee's wife, Choi Ka-ping, founded Mighty Current Media, a publishing house specializing in books critical of the Chinese Communist Party. Choi herself is a Mainland-educated writer who has a regular column in one of the pro-Beijing newspapers in Hong Kong, *Ta Kung Pao* 大公報. Choi's partner in this enterprise was a German-based businessman who later transferred all of his shares to Gui Minghai and Lui Por. Both Gui and Lui have also disappeared. Cheung Ji-ping, business manager of Mighty Current Media and bookstore manager Lam Wing-kei went missing too, after visiting Shenzhen in October 2015.[2] Legal scholars and human rights groups view the disappearance of Lee and his four colleagues at Mighty Current Media as the latest example of the ever-lengthening arm of the Chinese state, which, as its economy grows, appears to be increasingly willing to reach beyond its own legal jurisdiction.[3]

The incident has had a profound effect on the people of Hong Kong because of its flouting of the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy, which was guaranteed in the Basic Law signed by the British and Chinese governments when the destiny of Hong Kong was determined in the 1980s. As a consequence of this incident, more people are aware of the tight controls on the print culture industry and their impact on post-socialist China. An open attack on the booksellers' behaviour published in the People's Republic of China's mouthpiece, the *Global Times* newspaper, demonstrates that print culture, despite the advent of new media

1 Jeffrey Wasserstrom: Then They Came for the Bookseller. The Los Angeles Review of Books, 9 January 2016. https://lareviewofbooks.org/essay/then-they-came-for-the-bookseller (13 January 2016).

2 Celine Ge: Missing Hong Kong Bookseller Lee Bo 'Doesn't Do Evil Things,' Friends Insist. *South China Morning Post*, 6 January 2016. http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/law-crime/article/1898230/missing-hong-kong-bookseller-lee-bo-doesnt-do-evil-things (7 January 2016).

3 Michael Forsythe: Many in Hong Kong Fear Beijing's Reach After Editor and Colleagues Disappear. *The New York Times*, 7 January 2016. http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/08/world/asia/hong-kong-lee-bo-bookseller-china.html?_r=0 (8 January 2016).

and internet technology, remains a medium that the PRC intends to control. The bestseller phenomenon of the past decade further supports the view that the PRC uses books and print culture to assert what Elizabeth Perry calls 'cultural governance'[4] in an increasingly consumer-oriented society. The dual function of print culture—as both a means of ideological indoctrination and a consumer product—reflects China's dilemma. On the one hand, the PRC would like people to indulge in the pseudo-freedom of the 'free' market and the openness of a more liberal-minded government. On the other hand, it wants to eradicate any risk of a disobedient readership.

This chapter looks at the phenomenon of print culture, with a specific focus on the period between 2008 and 2012. Attention will be paid to books in the annual Top Ten bestseller charts and to the monthly Top Ten Bestseller charts for non-fiction works and the latter's strong connections to the cultural governance of the state. Works of fiction will not be included in our discussion even though the term 'bestsellers' was originally coined to describe literary works.[5] Rather than analyzing the popularity of Han Han 韓寒 (b. 1982)[6] or Guo Jingming 郭敬明 (b. 1983)[7], who write fiction to entertain readers, this study focuses on the intricate relationship between bestsellers, cultural consciousness and the formation of a reading community of Chinese classics in the new millennium. China's print culture both conditions and facilitates social cohesion and the formation of a collective consciousness, which had been undermined by thirty years of the open-door policy (i.e. *gaige kaifang* 改革開放) advocated by Deng Xiaoping. The discussion will deal with both the function and significance of print culture in post-socialist China, and the intricate relationship between cultural control and the market economy under the rule of China's Communist Party.

This chapter will first trace publication trends in post-socialist China. It will then examine China's bestseller business and its complex relationship with the Chinese government's cultural policy. Some references will be made to examples from *guoxue* 國學 (education in

4 Elizabeth J Perry: *Cultural Governance in Contemporary China: 'Re-Orienting' Party Propaganda*. Harvard-Yenching Institute Working Paper Series. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2013.

5 John Sutherland: *Bestsellers: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press 2007, p. 17.

6 Han Han is a professional rally-driver, writer and blogger, among many other roles. He was named one of the most influential people in the world by *Times* Magazine in May 2010. His blog has had nearly half a billion visitors since it began. See Evan Osnos: The Han Dynasty: How Far Can a Youth-Culture Idol Tweak China's Establishment? *The New Yorker*, 4 July 2011. http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/07/04/the-han-dynasty (1 December 2015). Giorgio Strafella/Daria Berg: The Making of an Online Celebrity: A Critical Analysis of Han Han's Blog. *China Information* 29:3 (2015), pp. 352–76. On Han Han's blog see Chapter 14.

7 Guo Jingming won numerous national literature prizes, and established his career in his 20s with his first novel *Huan Cheng* 幻城 (City of fantasies, 2003), which sold 1.5 million copies. He joined the Forbes Rich Chinese List in 2012 with a record annual income of more than 27.6 million yuan. See Nan Wu: 'Shallow' Chinese Movie *Tiny Times* Rouses Critics and Fans of Writer Guo Jingming. *South China Morning Post*, 6 July 2013. http://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/arts-culture/article/1276716/shallow-chinese-movie-tiny-times-rouses-guo-jingmings-critics (1 December 2015).

Chinese history and traditions) that show the emerging roles of intellectuals and new cross-media collaborations.[8] Data on bestsellers will be drawn from the Beijing Open Book Market Research Institute (*Beijing kaijuan xinxi jishu youxian gongsi* 北京開卷信息技術有限公司).[9] During the period under study, the data show a proliferation of books and introductions to the classics that gradually gave way to studies and edited collections about the Party-state and Party leaders. It seems as though, once a reading community had been forged by publishing the classics, there was a ready audience for works of Party policy. Given the state-controlled policy and print system, this is not merely a market strategy or promotion, but rather a careful strategy intended to encourage a collective adherence to cultural identity. The print culture's focus on the Party's successes and their celebration—i.e. the 30th anniversary of the Open Door Policy in 2008, the Beijing 2008 Olympics, the Shanghai World Exposition in 2010, and Mo Yan's 莫言 (b. 1955) Nobel Prize for Literature in 2012—reflects the growing importance of Party politics, a stronger identification with the national agenda, and an increase in readership.[10] The discussion reaches the tentative conclusion that the rise and fall of bestsellers will continue to reflect government policy, and that print media will continue to be an instrument of ideological shaping or indoctrination. As one can observe from the book charts, most published books—apart from online books—are functional, dealing with subjects such as self-improvement, health, education, parenting, and the like. It is likely that the government will approve of the proliferation of books on such non-controversial topics.

Critics may argue that the book charts fail to reflect the general picture of reading habits and the formation of reading communities. Still the popularity of works such as *Mingchao naxie shier* 明朝那些事兒 (Some things concerning the Ming dynasty, 2006-2009) by Dangnian Mingyue 當年明月 (Shi Yue 石悅 b. 1979)[11] suggests that the print market is still of great importance to both publishers and readers, as well as to the state, because it can be observed, monitored and analyzed. Books in China are inexpensive, their prices generally ranging from RMB 15 to 70 (USD 2 to 10).[12] The bestseller phenomenon in China is partly attributable

8 Ling Li: Why is the Tradition So Red? *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 42:1-2 (2010), pp. 131-59; also Kang Liu: Search for a New Cultural Identity: China's Soft Power and Media Culture Today. *Journal of Contemporary China* 21:78 (2012), pp. 915–31.

9 Beijing Open Book was founded in 1998. Its 'Open Book Retail Sales Monitoring System' collects sales data from more than 2000 retailers in large and medium-sized cities in mainland China. The research institute also provides analysis and bestseller charts for media and journals such as *Publishing Today*, *China Publishers*, etc. See Open Book. http://www.openbook.com.cn/EN/ (12 May 2016).

10 The annual growth of print sales in mainland China has been around 5% since 2008. See Who's Reading What? The East is Read. *The Economist*, 10 March 2012. http://www.economist.com/node/21549989 (10 May 2016).

11 This is a work of historical fiction about the Ming dynasty published between March 2006 and March 2009 online. The book was later edited, printed and sold in bookstores. It was perceived as the most popular historical fiction bestseller in China.

12 Using the Top Ten Bestseller charts in 2012 as an example, the cheapest book is *Xiaomao riji* 笑貓日記 (Diary of an adorable cat) by Yang Hongying 楊红櫻 (b. 1962), which costs 15 RMB, and the most

to the 'the principle of access to knowledge and partly because the structure did not have all the features of a commercial system'.[13] Because of this unique situation, it is likely that the CCP will continue to use the publishing sector to bolster ideologies and cultural cohesion.

The History of Print Culture in the PRC

Ian McGowan's analysis of print culture found that the CCP has a vested interest in its development and its impact on the general population.[14] He also maintains that the main aim of publishing is not to provide entertainment, but that instead it serves an ideological and political function.[15] This, in McGowan's view, is shown by the fact that right after the founding of the PRC in 1949 the Ministry of Propaganda set up the Xin Hua 新華 (New China) Bookstore, which not only became the dominant book retailer in China, with thousands of branches, but also 'ran the state printing plants and was the publishing organ of the Party and government'.[16] Before the 1980s the entire wholesale system was in the tight grip of the government's order and distribution process, quite the opposite of a free market system.[17]

The 1980s represented a new era for print culture.[18] According to Zhou and Lu, the growing commercialization of Chinese culture drove a new approach to publishing.[19] With the introduction of the open-door policy and conversion to a market economy, publishers became more consumer- and market-oriented.[20] Publishers were also 'less restricted by political and party guidelines than they had been'.[21] A wider range of genres—popular fiction, entertainment, lifestyle magazines, foreign literature in translation—became available.[22] The stimulus

expensive is the translation of *Shidifu Jiabosi zhuan* 史蒂夫·喬布斯傳 (Steve Jobs) which costs 68 RMB. Beijing Open Book Market Consulting Center 北京開卷信息技術有限公司: 2012 nian shida changxiaoshu fenxi 2012 年十大暢銷書分析. *Chuban cankao* (November 2012), pp. 30–32.

13 Ian McGowan: Publishing in China. *Publishing Research Quarterly* (Spring 1999), p. 24.

14 McGowan, Publishing in China, p. 23. In his study of the function of propaganda, Kong Shuyu argues in a similar vein that publishing houses had political functions to perform during the socialist era. The state 'took control of various aspects of the publishing business, from the rationing of paper to the allocation of specific subject matter for publication'. State control has continued even after the Mao era. See Shuyu Kong: *Consuming Literature: Best Sellers and the Commercialization of Literary Production in Contemporary China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press 2014, p. 38.

15 McGowan, Publishing in China, p. 23. Before the introduction of the market economy, China's publishing industry—unlike in the West—was not tied to the free market, but to a state-controlled socialist system.

16 *Ibid*. p. 23.

17 *Ibid*., p. 25.

18 Baiyi Zhou/Shanshan Lu: Changxiaoshu chuban sanshinian 暢銷書出版三十年. *Chuban kexue* 6:16 (2008), p. 5.

19 *Ibid*., p. 5.

20 *Ibid*., p. 6.

21 Kong, *Consuming Literature*, p. 2.

22 *Ibid*.

of the market economy therefore led to new titles and genres, which gave the impression of a wide freedom of choice and a greater liberality on the part of the CCP. McGowan detects that much has changed since the mid-1980s due to the impact of national economic reforms.[23] While many presses remain state-owned, the subsidies to the presses have been withdrawn and the editors are forced to produce titles with greater market potential in order to protect themselves from falling sales.[24] While state-owned publishers are under pressure to make greater profits, senior Chinese officials continue to lay stress on social value and high quality content.[25] This suggests that the Chinese government has the intention to use the publishing industry to promote specific kinds of reading communities that would share mainstream cultural consciousness. It is therefore no surprise that the PRC promotes, disseminates, and circulates a particular interpretation of post-socialist China through print culture. My discussion will involve an analysis of the bestseller phenomenon in the post-Socialist era, to reveal how these reading communities were formed.

Bestsellers in Post-Socialist China and Data Collection

In his analysis of bestsellers in Western culture, John Sutherland argues that the bestseller is a concept that continues to evolve over the course of history. The term was first used in 1902 to refer to very popular fiction titles in the United States.[26] It is not surprising that the term originated in the West: at the turn of the twentieth century, America and Britain possessed printing, transport, and communication technologies beyond the scope of the East. The term also captures the popular basis of the literary world and book trade market of the West.[27] When it was introduced in China, the term 'bestseller' (*changxiao shu* 暢銷書) had a powerful impact on the publishing industry. In Sun Qingguo's analysis, the concept of bestsellers has become widely used in mainland China since the millennium, now that many books serve as entertainment, become consumer products and have a short life cycle.[28] This changed the way literature was perceived. Books need not be a 'noble spiritual food to nourish the young or [...] a rigid ideological tool to mobilize the people'; instead, as argued by Kong Shuyu, 'books, even literary works, could be treated as commodities to be mass produced, advertised,

23 McGowan, Publishing in China, p. 24.

24 *Ibid*.

25 Quoted in McGowan's article, the Deputy Editor-in-Chief of the People's Literature Publishing House stresses that 'the Chinese publishers are obliged to persist in correctly guiding the people forward with correct opinion. They must advocate healthy, lofty ideology and culture, in order to create a good environment of public opinion for the modernization drive'. McGowan, Publishing in China, p. 26.

26 John Sutherland, *Bestsellers*, p. 17.

27 Sutherland, *Bestsellers*, p. 7.

28 Qingguo Sun: Economics of the Chinese Book Market. *Publishing Research Quarterly* (2002), pp. 57.

and sold for profit'.[29] It took both the state and the public some time to register the meaning and consequence of such a shift in the basis of publishing.

Kong Shuyu, a pioneering scholar of literary and print culture, observes that Chinese publishers adapted swiftly to the market system and used 'clever new market and promotional techniques to repackage elite and classical literary works—works that previously would not have appealed to a large readership—in order to turn them into best sellers, or at least generate a profit from them'.[30] For Kong, this is an example of commercialization at its most powerful, something that 'creates demand instead of simply responding to demand'.[31] Kong points out that the creation of bestsellers is initiated by publishers with the intention of generating profit, as most of the publishers were transiting from government organizations to commercial enterprises.[32] I would add that in the case of China the creation of bestsellers was the product of the collaborative efforts of publishers and the state. In producing bestsellers of certain types, both publishers and the state benefited. Many bestsellers in the new millennium would not have been bestsellers if they had not first been promoted and disseminated on CCTV, the state-owned television broadcaster.

The data used in this chapter (i.e., bestseller book charts) are drawn from the annual and monthly reports of the Beijing Open Book Market Consulting Center (*Beijing kaijuan xinxi jishu youxian gongsi* 北京開卷訊息技術有限公司), which are printed in *Chuban cankao* 出版參考 (Publishing World). Established in 1998, the Center is the first and only book market research institute in China. Together with the *Zhongguo tushu shangbao* 中國圖書商報 (China book business report), the Center established a national book retail market tracking system to record the monthly sales records of nearly 100 large bookstores in 50 major Chinese cities. The system represents 12 per cent of the Chinese book retail market and monitors all titles published in the Chinese language. In 2001, the Center's Books in Print list contained over 480,000 titles and monitored the market performance of all book publishers in China.[33] According its executive manager, Sun Qingguo, the Center has played a pivotal role in speeding up the marketization and commercialization of the industry. Its team of researchers 'scientifically analyzes book sales records and reports promptly and accurately to the industry to help publishing professionals understand the market better, its development, trends, and the competition, and forecasts'.[34]

The year 2008 was significant in many respects. First, it marked the thirtieth anniversary of China's reform and open-door policy. Books that sum up the achievements of the past

29 Kong, *Consuming Literature*, p. 4 fn14.
30 *Ibid*., p. 7.
31 *Ibid*., p. 7.
32 Xiaoyan Tang: Ten-Year Survey of China's Book Industry. *Publishing Research Quarterly* (Summer 2006), p. 66.
33 Qingguo Sun, Economics of the Chinese Book Market, p. 62.
34 *Ibid*., p. 63.

three decades have proliferated.[35] The 2008 Beijing Olympics also constituted a predictable stimulus for publishers, which is reflected in the book charts.[36] According to Jeffrey Hays, academic books (on literature, history, and the social sciences) published during the Republic of China years were 'rediscovered' *en masse* in 2008.[37] The year also marked the peak of *guoxue*: Sales of books by Yu Dan 于丹 (b. 1965), Yi Zhongtian 易中天 (b. 1947), and Dangnian Mingyue dominated the bestseller charts.[38]

Given the international attention and acknowledgement of China's position as a world power that accompanied the Beijing Olympics, one could argue that 2008 was the year that marked the coming of age of the PRC. Although the popularity of such *guoxue* publications gradually waned in later years, there was an upsurge of Party-supported publishing in 2012 when Mo Yan, recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature and vice-chairman of the Party-aligned Chinese Writers' Association, was praised by the state as an example of a government-supported writer who embodied the best of China's literary traditions. The top five titles in the Ten Bestsellers Combined Book Chart (fiction and non-fiction) of October 2012 were all works by Mo Yan.[39] By November, Mo Yan was the author of all ten books on the list.[40] Here we can clearly see the impact of literary awards on reading.[41]

As with Karin Wahl-Jorgensen's concept of 'mediated citizenship', where acts of citizenship 'do not arise from rational, detached observation, but from a set of strong emotions, including anger, love, hate, and a sense of injustice'[42], reading communities bring together the 'imagined community' posited by Benedict Anderson in his analysis of the modern

35 Over ten titles on the thirtieth anniversary of China's reform and open-door policy were published by Zhongguo chuban jituan 中國出版集團 (China Publishers Ltd.) in 2008. See Zhang Zhiqiang 張志強: 2008 nian Zhongguo chuban huigu 2008年中國出版回顧. *Quanguo xinshu zixun yuekan* (January 2009), p. 51.

36 Zhang Zhiqiang, 2008 nian Zhongguo chuban huigu, p. 51.

37 Jeffrey Hays: Publishing Trends and Modern Book Market in China. *Facts and Details*, December 2012. http://factsanddetails.com/china/cat7/sub39/item1622.html (23 September 2013).

38 *Ibid*.

39 Beijing Open Book Market Consulting Center 北京開卷信息技術有限公司: 2012 nian shiyue quanguo changxiaoshu paixingbang 2012年10月全國暢銷書排行榜. *Chuban cankao* (November 2012), pp. 30–32.

40 Beijing Open Book Market Consulting Center 北京開卷信息技術有限公司: 2012 nian shiyiyue quanguo changxiaoshu paixingbang 2012年11月全國暢銷書排行榜. *Chuban cankao* (December 2012), pp. 31–33.

41 On 11 October, 2012 Mo Yan was awarded the 2012 Nobel Prize for Literature. As reflected in the best-seller chart of October 2012, six of Mo Yan's novels appeared in the Top Ten List. This reflects the strong enthusiasm to read Mo Yan's work on the one hand, and that international recognition can increase the popularity of Chinese writers at home, on the other. See Beijing Open Book Market Consulting Center 北京開卷信息技術有限公司: 2012 nian shiyue quanguo changxiaoshu paixingbang 2012年10月全國暢銷書排行榜.

42 Karin Wahl-Jorgensen: Mediated Citizenship(s): An Introduction. *Social Semiotics* 16:2 (2006), p. 199.

national state's reliance on print culture.[43] It is through reading that strangers living in the same geographical space share a sense of commonality and collectiveness. Anderson's thesis is supported by the reading habits of people in post-socialist China, as people celebrate the global cultural recognition symbolized by the Nobel literature prize.

Guoxue (national studies), Publication and Cultural Governance

Guoxue, or 'studies in Chinese history and traditions', has been a subject of much debate since the 1980s.[44] The neo-Confucian scholar Tu Weiming has stressed that 'the revitalization of the Confucian discourse may contribute to the formation of a much needed communal critical self-consciousness among East Asian intellectuals'.[45] He notes that a Confucian model, unlike its Western counterparts, offers an 'alternative model of sustainable development, with an emphasis on the ethical and spiritual dimensions of human flourishing'.[46] His vision of the revival of Confucian principles is considered by Arif Dirlik to be a means of encouraging national unity. The concentric circles of self, family, and society and the hierarchical structure of Confucianism would act as an antidote to the problems arising from Euro-modernity.[47]

The success of China's opening up and its exponential growth in the global market as both producer and consumer have caused the state to assert tighter controls over its citizens. China's success must be shown to be not a mere mimicry of the Western capitalist paradigm but a continuation of its traditional legacy. The intended effect is 'an enhanced national self-confidence to be accompanied by a heightened reassessment of traditional culture'.[48] The enhancement of China's cultural 'soft power' on the international stage is evident. Many of the initiatives taken up by the CCP are aimed at demonstrating China's cultural strength.[49] For

43 Benedict Anderson: *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso 1983.

44 Arif Dirlik: *Guoxue*/National Learning in the Age of Global Modernity. *China Perspectives* 1 (2011), p. 6.

45 Weiming Tu: Beyond the Enlightenment Mentality. In: Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Berthrong (eds) *Confucianism and Ecology: The Interrelation of Heaven, Earth, and Humans*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1998, pp. 3–21.

46 *Ibid*, p. 16.

47 In Arif Dirlik's (*Guoxue*/National Learning in the Age of Global Modernity) extensive discussion on *guoxue*, he argues that that the trajectory of *guoxue* as a field of learning has been shaped by the dynamic interplay of two paradigms: the turning of 'a Chinese way of "knowing"' into 'the locus of national identity and a method for its analysis' and the 'cosmopolitan' paradigm, which was a product of the May Fourth New Culture Movement that superseded the nativist paradigm (p. 5). Today, however, the critical approaches adopted by the May Fourth thinkers have been marginalized, and *guoxue* is more of a revival of national consciousness, using the antiquity of the nation to justify the legitimacy of the state.

48 Jiaming Chen: The National Studies Craze, trans. Stacy Mosher. *China Perspectives* 1 (2011), pp. 22–23.

49 In his analysis of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, Geremie R. Barmé maintains that the creative team behind the opening ceremony wanted to present the world with a vision of China as a modern and open

the government, Confucianism is a way to encourage order and bring more legitimacy to its rule: the philosophy's emphasis on respect for authority, for example, appeals to Communist Party leaders.[50]

In his detailed analysis of the study of Chinese traditions, Chen Jiaming provides a comprehensive list of government attempts to encourage certain values. As early as September 1984, the CCP Central Committee secretariat established the government-funded China Confucius Foundation, which, according to Chen, marks a major shift in the attitude of the Chinese government toward Confucius. state-supported commemorations of Confucius have become more common, and the number of people studying his works has increased. In November 1986, 'Modern Neo-Confucian Studies' was a key topic for discussion by the National Social Sciences Foundation of China during its Seventh Five-Year Plan (1986-1990). In October 1994, the International Confucius Federation was established. In September 2005, the revival of interest in Confucius could be observed once again when CCTV carried live broadcasts of ceremonies honouring Confucius in Qufu and Shanghai.[51]

In the 1990s, the Ministry of Education began approving more courses in traditional Confucian culture. The establishment of a 'national studies institute' (or, 'School of Guoxue - Chinese Classics') at Renmin University in 2005 helped to spread the popularity of Confucian studies to educational circles. The government also supports 145 non-profit Confucius Institutes in more than 52 countries and regions, aimed at promoting Chinese language and culture.[52] The number of Institutes continues to grow.

Among the Chinese government's initiatives, the use of state media to forge a strong cultural Chinese identity and improve China's international image is particularly influential.[53] Liu Kang argues that Chinese intellectuals have played a pivotal role in furthering this agenda. Intellectuals are seen as beneficiaries of the open-door policy: the 1980s 'saw the ascendance of the intellectuals to the center stage of China's social life, leading the sociopolitical movements of the so-called Emancipation of Minds (*sixiang jiefang* 思想解放), the Second Enlightenment (*di er ci qimeng* 第二次啟蒙) or Cultural Reflection (*wenhua fansi* 文化反思, also known as the 'Cultural Fever', *wenhua re* 文化熱)'.[54]

society whose citizens would think of themselves as members of the global community. See Geremie R. Barmé: China's Flat Earth: History and 8 August 2008. *The China Quarterly* 197 (2009), p. 84.

50 Maureen Fan: Confucius Making a Comeback in Money-Driven Modern China. *Washington Post*, 24 July 2007. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/23/AR2007072301859.html (1 November 2010).

51 Jiaming Chen, The National Studies Craze, p. 23.

52 Fan, Confucius Making a Comeback in Money-Driven Modern China.

53 In Liu's analysis, in 2009 the Chinese government spent RMB 25 billion, or USD 6.6 billion, to fund international ventures undertaken by the state to improve its national image: 'It was reported that the plan will target global audiences by constructing multilingual versions of the China Central Television (CCTV), Xinhua and the *People's Daily*' (Kang Liu, Searching for a New Cultural Identity, p. 915-16).

54 *Ibid*., p. 922. The expressions 'Second Enlightenment' and 'Cultural Reflection' were used rather loosely in the 1990s to highlight the project of cultural critique undertaken by philosophers Li Zehou and Liu

However, the crackdown in Tiananmen Square in 1989 and the increasing corporatization of the education sector have led to an identity crisis among Chinese intellectuals. One significant change in China's shift to a socialist market economy has been the professionalization of Chinese academics, which has had the effect of diminishing the critical spirit and sense of social responsibility of Chinese intellectuals. In Wang Ning's analysis of the contemporary Chinese cultural situation, he argues that the state policy of building a prosperous and harmonious society has created a more relaxed atmosphere in which people are more eager to enjoy material and cultural commodities. He suggests that 'high-culture products have become [...] consumer goods rather than [...] spiritual nourishment.'[55] The rise of popular culture and the popularization of Internet writing has continued to challenge established canonical culture, its literature and art.[56] This new cultural situation leads directly to the rise of 'cultural stars' such as Yu Dan[57], who was originally a young professor of media arts at Beijing Normal University with a classical Chinese literature major. She is very popular with ordinary readers and TV viewers for reinterpreting Chinese classics such as Confucius' *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects*) but has been criticized by literary and cultural studies scholars for her erroneous interpretations.[58]

As far as the impact of *guoxue* on mass media is concerned, these studies have contributed to the popularization of Chinese classics and the transformation of intellectuals. For international audiences, a TV programme titled *Baijia jiangtan* 百家講壇 (*Lecture Room*) based on the sage's teachings made Confucianism easy to digest. Intellectuals such as Yi Zhongtian[59] and Yu Dan became media stars with shows that aired in February and October 2006 respectively. Yi Zhongtian's *Pinsanguo* 品三國 (Commentary on *Three Kingdoms*) and Yu Dan's *Lunyu xinde* 論語心得 (About *The Analects*), both featured in *Lecture Room*[60], became overnight sensations and increased the popularity of studies in China's history and traditions. The

Zaifu, among others. Their reflections on subjectivity directly led to the revisiting of China's cultural heritage and traditions in the 1990s. A distinction between the trends listed here emerged later, when the 'cultural fever' developed into a series of events directly related to the revival of Confucianism. On the concept of 'Second Enlightenment' readers can consult Li Zehou yu bashi niandai Zhongguo sixiangjie 李澤厚與八十年代中國思想界. *Open Times* 11 (2011). http://www.opentimes.cn/bencandy.php?fid=324&aid=1541 (6 July 2016). For a discussion on the idea of 'cultural reflection' see Kang Liu: Subjectivity, Marxism, and Cultural Theory in China. *Social Text* 31/32 (1992), pp. 114–40;

55 Ning Wang: Chinese Literary and Cultural Trends in a Postrevolutionary Era. *Comparative Literature Studies* 49:4 (2012), p. 513.

56 *Ibid*., p. 512.

57 Yu Dan is an associate professor of film and television at Beijing Normal University. Since the 2006 CCTV talk show and the publication of a collection of her lectures, she has become a media celebrity. *Yu Dan lunyu xinde* 于丹《論語》心得 (Yu Dan's insights into the *Analects*, 2006)—her personal and successful reading of Confucian philosophy—has sold millions of copies.

58 Ning Wang, Chinese Literary and Cultural Trends in a Postrevolutionary Era, p. 520.

59 Yi Zhongtian is a professor in the Faculty of Humanities at Xiamen University.

60 *Lecture Room* first aired in 2001. Yi and Dan's two programmes represented its popularity peak. The press has dubbed the two hosts 'the golden couple,' not only because they are popular TV stars but also because they are the 'golden geese' that generate huge profits.

programmes were simultaneously published as books. Yu Dan's book sold more than 600 thousand copies when it was first released and made her the second best paid writer in 2007.[61]

To some critics, *Lecture Room* best reflects 'the Chinese version of "political correctness" in the popular media.'[62] The success of the TV shows[63] and the subsequent rise of intellectuals as media celebrities seemed to offer answers to pressing questions: What position should traditional culture hold in the development of post-socialist China? How should the relationship between the national character and modern image be managed?

The popularity of the shows has been reinforced by the print market. The high book sales suggest a strong reading community which has faith in the revival of cultural self-confidence based on Confucian ideals. Cultural identification, highlighting Chinese uniqueness and success, is in demand with China's citizens and has been created by the state, with help from the market economy and the print market. The effect is similar to that observed by British historian Eric Hobsbawm: ancient materials are often used to construct 'invented traditions of a novel type' for novel purposes.[64] Confucianism, similarly, is being used for new political purposes in post-socialist China. Reading popular versions of Confucianism has become more and more popular among the general public, as reflected in the sales of the bestsellers. The reinvention of tradition via mass media and TV shows encourages the public to feel proud of China's classics and heritage while showing that traditions are at the same time compatible with the requirements of modern life.[65]

61 Baiyi Zhou/Shanshan Lu, *Changxiaoshu chuban sanshinian*.

62 Kang Liu, Searching for a New Cultural Identity, p. 924.

63 The popularity of the shows can be further demonstrated by the fact that popular books relating to Confucianism and traditional culture, i.e. works by Yu Dan and Yi Zhongtian, were bestsellers in 2006, 2007 and 2008; and the phenomenon of 'children reading the classics' emerged after the airing of Yu Dan and Yi Zhongtian's TV programmes. Some elementary schools had their students recite from *The Analects* for 10 minutes every morning, noon, and evening. References to bestsellers can be found in Beijing Open Book Market Consulting Center 北京開卷信息技術有限公司: Kaijuan Zhongguo changxiao tushu xilie huigu zhi san: 2005-2007 開卷《中國暢銷圖書系列回顧》之三: 2005-2007. *Xinhua wang*, 18 December 2013. http://news.xinhuanet.com/book/2013-12/18/c_125876294.htm (13 January 2016) and Beijing Open Book Market Consulting Center 北京開卷信息技術有限公司: *2008-2010* 開卷《中國暢銷圖書系列回顧》之四: 2008-2010. *Xinhua wang*, 24 December 2013. http://news.xinhuanet.com/book/2013-12/24/c_125903659.htm (13 January 2016)

64 Eric Hobsbawm: Introduction: Inventing Traditions. In: Eric Hobsbawm, Terence O. Ranger (eds): *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983, p. 1.

65 Some references to the influence of Confucius in contemporary China at different levels can be found in Yuanyuan Wang's discussion. Yuanyuan Wang: The Travel of Fei Mu's film *Confucius* from 1939 to the present. *Journal of Cambridge Studies* 4:2 (2009), p. 134.

The Bestseller Phenomenon and Reading Communities

An overview of the bestseller charts provides a clear picture of the popularity of these TV lectures and the related *guoxue* books (i.e., books that reference the classics or Chinese history and traditions). In the 2006 combined bestsellers book chart, studies of the classics were in three out of ten places (nos. 1, 3, and 9).[66] In 2007, four out of ten (nos. 1, 2, 3, and 5) books were by Yu Dan and Yi Zhongtian. In 2007, the ratings became more genre-specific: culture/everyday life, economics, health, children/adolescents, and literature. In the literature category, Yi Zhongtian's *Pinsanguo* 品三國 (Commentary on the Three Kingdoms) remained the most profitable title. In 2008, two out of ten (nos. 5 and 7) were works by Yu Dan.[67] In 2009, three out of the ten books on the list were by Dangnian Mingyue[68], who wrote popular histories of the Ming Dynasty. Considered one of the most well-received series on the Ming dynasty (1344-1644), the works supported the government's agenda. The works of Yi Zhongtian and Qian Wenzhong's books on *San Zijing* 三字經 (Three characters classic, 2011) introduced the classics to the general public in simple everyday language. In 2010, the guidebook for the Shanghai World Exposition reached second place in the social sciences category. In 2011, four out of the Top Ten Bestsellers (fiction and non-fiction combined) (in places 2, 3, 4, and 5) were the collected sayings and lectures of Zhu Rongji (former Vice-Premier of the state Council and a powerful figure in the Party-state).[69] Books on the history and legacy of the CCP were also widely published and circulated. No wonder some critics characterized the publication industry in 2011 as 'red.'[70]

Some of these works have become extended popular series, which stay in the bestseller charts for more than three years. Yu Dan has written about how she has been enjoying and understanding life since cementing her reputation with her works on the classics. In 2012, a 'reading craze' was linked to Mo Yan's Nobel Prize. Within 60 days of the announcement,

66 Beijing Open Book Market Consulting Center 北京開卷信息技術有限公司: Kaijuan Zhongguo changxiao tushu xilie huigu zhi san: 2005–2007 開卷《中國暢銷圖書系列回顧》之三: 2005–2007.

67 Beijing Open Book Market Consulting Center 北京開卷信息技術有限公司: Kaijuan Zhongguo changxiao tushu xilie huigu zhi si: 2008–2010 開卷《中國暢銷圖書系列回顧》之四: 2008–2010.

68 Shi Yu (who uses the pen name Dangnian Mingyue; see also above in this Chapter) is an assistant research fellow in the Society for Ming Dynasty History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. He became a popular figure after the publication of *Some things concerning the Ming Dynasty* online. The online series ended on March 21, 2009, and was quickly edited and published in hard copy. Cross-media collaboration has become increasingly popular.

69 Beijing Open Book Market Consulting Center 北京開卷信息技術有限公司: Kaijuan Zhongguo changxiao tushu xilie huigu zhi wu: 2011–2012 開卷《中國暢銷圖書系列回顧》之五: 2011–2012. *Xinhua wang*, 30 December 2013. http://news.xinhuanet.com/book/2013-12/30/c_125932098.htm (13 January 2016).

70 Shiyi Wu: 2011 nian Zhongguo dalu tushu shichang huigu 2011 年中國大陸圖書市場回顧. *Quanguo xinshu zixun yuekan* 157 (January 2012), pp. 92–96

the total value of sales of his work exceeded 2 million RMB.[71] His latest novel, *Wa* 蛙 (Frog, 2009), has sold more than 800,000 copies. His books dominated the bestseller chart in October, November, and December of 2012. Since then, his success has been overshadowed by that of popular writers such as Han Han and Guo Jingming.[72] There are no works of social science in the bestseller chart of 2012. The top five bestsellers of 2012 are all reprints or new editions of old works by Guo Jingming, Han Han, Jiu Ba Dao 九把刀 (Ke Jingteng 柯景騰b. 1978), and Jiang Rong 姜戎 (i.e. Lü Jiamin 呂嘉民, b. 1946). Yu Dan continues to have two titles on the list, and books by Zhu Rongji and histories of the CCP continue to be popular.

The trends described above definitely reflect a widespread interest in Chinese history. The continuing large sales indicate an ever-expanding readership. When the sale of classics gradually declined, another phenomenon occurred: an increase in interest in China's history and heritage, and in the ideological legacy of the state. This trend is also worthy of attention because one would expect that in the increasingly diversified social world of China books about entertainment or self-help would dominate the market rather than the pedantic promotions of Party ideology. In China, a unique situation has occurred: a reading community devoted to works of state discourse has been created. And this creation is very much a collaboration between the state, the market economy, and print culture.

In his study of contemporary Chinese culture, Wang Ning points out that the commercialization of Chinese literary works has failed to resolve the tension between literary creation and commercialization.[73] Nonetheless, the success of the published lectures seems to blur the division between high and low culture. As Wang observes, the reinterpretations of Chinese classics such as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* 三國演義 by Yi Zhongtian 易中天and Confucius's *Analects* 論語by Yu Dan have 'undoubtedly undermined the authority of literary scholars but at the same time have enabled these classics to become better known among contemporary audiences'.[74] Post-socialist China has encouraged a more relaxed atmosphere, one where people anticipate a harmonious society and spiritual enrichment as well: 'They cannot be satisfied with material enjoyment but rather want to consume cultural commodities in an artistic and aesthetic way.'[75] There are now many fervent supporters of rereading the classics. This sense of collective identity is of course complemented by external factors such as the hosting of the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008 and the Shanghai World Exposition in 2010.

It is the highly-rated TV talk shows and the bestsellers associated with these shows, however, that are the best examples of how the state allows its citizens to benefit from a consumer society while conforming to the state mission of building a harmonious society.

71 Wan Lihui 萬麗慧: 2012 nian Zhongguo dalu tushu shichang huigu 2012年中國大陸圖書市場回顧*Quanguo xinshu zixun yuekan* 170 (2013), p. 61.

72 Wan Lihui 萬麗慧: 2013 nian dalu shushi guancha 2013年大陸書市觀察. *Quanguo xinshu zixun yuekan* 183 (2014), pp. 54–60.

73 Ning Wang, Chinese Literary and Cultural Trends in a Postrevolutionary Era.

74 *Ibid*., p. 513.

75 *Ibid*.

The popular intellectuals have found a new identity: they fulfil 'a dual mission of both the media and CCP propaganda departments, serving as entertainers as well as proselytizers of the dominant ideology in the media age.'[76] Even more influential are the well-established reading communities they have created, communities that turn to the Chinese classics and works extolling traditional values for their preferred reading. This influence can also be witnessed in the development of the literary scene beyond 2012, for example in the year of 2014, Beijing's Sanlian Bookstore became the first 24-hour bookstore in mainland China, and cities such as Guangzhou, Xi'an, and Chongqing followed suit. This can be interpreted as both an initiative for the bookstores to encourage people to read and as an indicator of the desire of readers to consume books.[77]

Yomi Braester coined the term 'cultural broker,'[78] which has been used to describe Chinese filmmakers and can be defined as 'individuals employing a variety of market strategies to increase the impact (and profits, of course) of cultural products by selling to other segments of the market'.[79] The term applies equally to the popular intellectuals who star in television talk shows. The book industry in China is a nexus of market principles and cultural ideologies.

Conclusion: Projecting into the Future and Beyond

It is important to note that the revival of *guoxue* stemmed from the revival of works on Confucianism.[80] Print culture remains the principal tool for the implementation of ideological control by the state. The government is still being very cautious with new social media[81], probably because they change so swiftly and are less controllable. In the western context, there are many incidents which have shown that new media can mobilize the public too easily and powerfully, and are capable of challenging the legitimacy of the state. According to Douglas Kellner and Richard Kahn, the power of new media can be exemplified by the 'Battle for Seattle' against the World Trade Organization (WTO) in December 1999, when a wave of anti-neoliberal movements emerged with the help of the global Internet. [82] It is possible that

76 Kang Liu, Searching for a New Cultural Identity, p. 926.

77 Xing Yi: The Year in Books. *China Daily*, 10 December 2014. http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/culture/2014-12/10/content_19054602.htm (11 December 2014).

78 Yomi Braester: Chinese Cinema in the Age of Advertisement: the Filmmaker as a Cultural Broker. *The China Quarterly* 183 (2005), pp. 549–64.

79 Michel Hockx/Julia Strauss: Introduction. *The China Quarterly* 183 (2005), p. 528.

80 See Sébastian Billioud's discussion of the rise of *guoxue* and party politics. Sébastian Billioud: Confucianism, 'Cultural Tradition,' and Official Discourse in China at the Start of the New Century, trans. Christopher Storey. *China Perspectives* 3 (2007), pp. 50–65.

81 Critical analysis of the function of the Internet and Chinese bloggers can be found in Strafella/Berg, The Making of an Online Celebrity: A Critical Analysis of Han Han's Blog.

82 Richard Kahn/Douglas Kellner: New Media and Internet Activism: From the 'Battle of Seattle' to Blogging. *New Media and Society* 6:1 (2004), pp. 87–95.

the Chinese government wants to maintain tight control over the circulation of hegemonic discourse and has put its faith in books[83], which have a long tradition and are considered a more elevated form of entertainment across different classes. It is, therefore, likely that print culture will remain an important means of fostering cultural images and identities.

In her analysis of cultural governance in contemporary China, Elizabeth Perry reminds her readers that the PRC relies heavily on the deployment of symbolic resources as instruments of political authority. It does so, moreover, in a manner that underscores the distinctively 'Chinese' character of the political system.[84] In the past two decades it has become clear that the PRC has devoted significant attention to symbolic means of affirming its legacy and legitimacy to rule. The 2008 Beijing Olympics, accordingly to Elizabeth Perry, 'provided a graphic illustration of the PRC's professed identity as the rightful inheritor and steward of a five-thousand-year-old civilization' and 'offered a spectacular display of the Communist Party's declaration to be perpetuating and perfecting a seamless cultural tradition'.[85] While the government emphasizes that schools, families, and society as a whole all bear the responsibility to instruct the younger generation in the protection and promotion of cultural relics, it also makes sure that they maintain strict control over this message through the promotion of traditional culture in schools and the establishment of Confucius Institutes around the world.[86] The formation of reading communities was effected by the massive production of print books and the reintroduction of the classics. The print culture, however, is rigidly censored: Party control has been asserted over the ideological content of print. This may also be reflected in the disappearance of five booksellers from Hong Kong, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, which is an indication of the extent of the PRC's control over print culture, now and in the long run.

If the PRC aims to build a strong Party and nation for the state and the people, there must be greater sensitivity to Chinese indigenous values in all sectors of life, from education to business operations, from ideology to popular entertainment. In the consumerism and social atomization that has accompanied the post-Mao era, many people have sought meaning, identity, and collective values in an idealized and essentialized reading of their own cultural heritage. Seeking an alternative to Western-defined modernity, this root-seeking movement has

83 See e.g. how the authorities acknowledged Mo Yan's achievements when the announcement of his Nobel Prize for Literature was made. Li Changchun, head of China's publicity and media organs, wrote in a letter that the award is 'a reflection of the ceaseless rise of China's comprehensive national strength and international influence'. This suggests that the state admits that China's cultural power can be acknowledged and disseminated via the proliferation of culture. See Tracey Fallon: Mo Yan's Big House and the CCP's Reaction to Nobel Prizes. *China Policy Institute*, 16 October 2012. http://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/chinapolicyinstitute/2012/10/16/mo-yans-big-house-and-the-ccps-reaction-to-nobel-prizes/ (13 May 2016).

84 Elizabeth J Perry, *Cultural Governance in Contemporary China*, p. 2.

85 *Ibid*., p. 4.

86 Billioud, Confucianism, 'Cultural Tradition,' and Official Discourse in China at the Start of the New Century, pp. 58-59.

seen a revival of interest in traditional philosophies, arts, and history. The Confucian concepts of engaging oneself in an 'unending process of creative self-transformation'[87] and the 'ideal of the great harmony'[88] between man and nature, will, in Tu Weiming's analysis, continue to be employed by the state to advocate a harmonious society while enjoying the success of the market economy. The acknowledgement of the rise of China as a world power must be accompanied by a stronger sense of self-confidence and cognizance. Reading communities devoted to Chinese classics have been constructed by both the market and the state. These reading communities will support and reproduce the dominant discourse, and help shape the cultural consciousness of the general public.

87 Weiming Tu, Beyong the Enlightenment Mentality, p. 13.
88 *Ibid*., p. 10.

8
From New Concept to Youth Economy: The Rise and Crisis of the Me Generation

Hui Faye Xiao

While the mainstream study of Chinese literature continues to be a history of canonical works and writers, today's young readers are enthusiastically embracing a group of new writers of their own age such as Guo Jingming 郭敬明 (b. 1983) and Han Han 韩寒 (b. 1982), who are prolific and often controversial. Both Han Han and Guo Jingming have appeared at the top of the bestseller list, superseding their senior peers including the Nobel Laureate Mo Yan 莫言 (b. 1955). They have also directed high-grossing summer blockbusters, and have run commercially successful literary journals and multi-media companies, representing the rise of a new generation of writers-filmmakers-entrepreneurs in a transmedial book culture that is bringing about an ongoing 'cultural revolution' in post-revolutionary China. However, the aesthetic and sociological significance of these versatile young writers and their works has been underappreciated by literary critics and scholars. Han Han has received more critical attention than Guo Jingming, mainly due to his newly-acquired status of 'public intellectual' and the political ramifications of his blogging.[1] In order to redress this situation and call for a critical re-examination of these young writers' creative writings, this chapter aims to study the rise of a generation growing up during China's reform era, focusing on the stylistic and transmedial innovations of the writers mentioned above as well as on their pivotal roles in the rapidly changing publication industry, book culture and mediascape of contemporary China.

Born in the 1980s, Guo Jingming and Han Han both belong to the Me Generation. In the American context, the Me Generation refers to the Baby Boomers (i.e. born between 1943 and 1960), but in the Chinese context the term has been used for the post-1980 (*baling hou* 80后) generation, i.e. the approximately 200 million Chinese born during the 1980s.[2] For this new generation of writers-filmmakers-entrepreneurs and their loyal young fans, the 1980s marked the starting point of two critical transitions in Chinese history: a paradigmatic shift from high socialism to high capitalism; and the implementation of the 'One Child' policy. While the former has brought about the radical marketization of the publishing industry

1 Angie Chau: A Public Intellectual in the Internet Age: Han Han's Everyday Appeal. *Chinese Literature Today* 5:1 (2015), pp. 73–81; Giorgio Strafella/Daria Berg: The Making of an Online Celebrity: A Critical Analysis of Han Han's Blog. *China Information* 29:3 (2015), pp. 1–25; Lijun Yang: Han Han and the Public. In: Perry Link/ Richard P. Madsen/Paul G. Pickowicz (eds): *Restless China*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield 2013, pp. 109–28.

2 Simon Elegant: China's Me Generation. *Time,* 5 November 2007. http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1675626,00.html (8 August 2016).

since the 1980s, the latter has ensured the growth of a younger generation with more familial investment and greater purchasing power for youth-oriented cultural products.

In the following sections of this chapter, I will start with an investigation of the economic and cultural conditions conducive to the rise of this young generation. Specifically, the self-transformation of the literary magazine *Mengya* 萌芽 (Budding) will be used as a case study of the marketization of China's publishing industry and the incubation of the Me Generation writers. Then I will turn to a close analysis of the new literary style and youth subjectivity created by the two trendsetting Me Generation writers on whom I have chosen to focus, and will argue that their literary explorations can be viewed, contrary to the mainstream literary critique of their works as 'shallow' and 'vulgar', as both continuation and subversion of the legacy of the May Fourth literary revolution. The last two sections will revolve around the ideas of a youth economy and crisis through an examination of the career paths of Han Han and Guo Jingming, both of whom have benefited from the blossoming of a transnational and transmedial youth-oriented book culture in an age of globalization. I argue that Guo and Han represent China's Me Generation with their creative and entrepreneurial practices that reinforce and at the same time contest the mainstream ideology, particularly the most recent state-sanctioned discourse of the China Dream (*Zhongguo meng* 中国梦) that aims to conjure up the glamorous image of a rising China. The rapidly changing political, economic and socio-cultural conditions contribute to the phenomenal market success of these Me Generation writers, something which would have been inconceivable to their senior peers, but also create a profound sense of youth crisis and nostalgia in an age of overwhelming change and social fragmentation.

Metamorphosis of a Youth-Oriented Literary Magazine

Any discussion about the rise of these Me Generation writers should start not only with the transformation of the book culture in China's reform era, but also, and more importantly, the radical make-over of a literary magazine, Budding, that had almost single-handedly produced the group of young bestselling writers to be discussed in this chapter.

As a result of Deng Xiaoping's inspection tour to South China in 1992, marketization has been actively promoted in every aspect of China's economic and social sectors, including culture. Since the 1990s, 'cultural system reform' (*wenhua tizhi gaige* 文化体制改革) has applied market logic to cultural production and distribution. For the first time in the history of the PRC, 'the "value" of a Chinese literary work had been linked directly to its market appeal.'[3]

Rather than being merely tools of political propaganda and ideological indoctrination, cultural products are redefined as commodities for sale in a 'free market' powered by domestic

3 Shuyu Kong: *Consuming Literature: Best Sellers and the Commercialization of Literary Production in Contemporary China.* Stanford: Stanford University Press 2005, p. 4

and transnational capital, but are also closely monitored and regulated by the state. As a result of the increasing capitalization and state-sanctioned marketization, literary production in today's China has become a part of the cultural industry (*wenhua chanye* 文化产业). It is subject to censorship from two sources: from the profit-oriented commercial censor, and from the government, the latter of which has received far more attention from mainstream media in the West. Stuck between a rock and a hard place, Chinese publishers, particularly those of literary magazines, have struggled hard to survive in the face of this double censorship.

One literary magazine, Budding, has emerged as the most successful in changing its publishing preferences and business strategies to adapt to this new reality of cultural industrialization and the commercialization of publication. It is published by the Shanghai Writers' Association, and has a long history and wide influence in the literary field. In 1930 Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881–1936), with the assistance of Feng Xuefeng 冯雪峰 (1903–1976), Rou Shi 柔石 (1902–1931), Wei Jinzhi 魏金枝 (1900–1972), and other members of the League of Left-Wing Writers (*Zuolian* 左联), founded a journal called *Mengya yuekan* 萌芽月刊 (Budding monthly) in Shanghai.[4] Because it contained socialist-themed literary works and translations of Soviet novels aimed at young people, *Budding Monthly* was shut down by the Nationalist government after five issues had been published. Interestingly, it also published the winning essays in the 'Middle School Student' writing competition organized by Kaiming 开明 Bookstore, a publisher and distributor of left-leaning literature where Ye Shengtao 叶圣陶 (1894–1988) was editor-in-chief. This writing competition can be regarded as a predecessor of the 'New Concept' Composition Contest (*xin gainian zuowen dasai* 新概念作文大赛) organized by *Budding* and will be further discussed later in this chapter. Though short-lived, the literary legacy of the youth-oriented journal was long-lasting. Around the end of Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) and the beginning of the Civil War (1946–1949) a literary magazine with a similar title, *Mengya* 萌芽 (Budding), was published in Chongqing 重庆 by a group of leftist intellectuals, to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Lu Xun's death and to continue instilling ideas of socialist revolution and literature into Chinese youth. This journal was also quickly terminated after publishing a mere four issues.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the literary magazine experienced yet another rebirth in 1956. Continuing the May Fourth legacy of politicizing youth as the national subject, the new government called for Chinese youth's participation in the socialist revolution and construction. During this period, the new *Budding* was the first youth-oriented journal in the history of the PRC.[5] The state-funded literary journal celebrated the legacy of the League of Left-Wing Writers, with its title written in Lu Xun's

4 Mu Ming 沐明: Mengya yuekan 萌芽月刊. *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu congkan* 7 (1980), pp. 318–19.

5 Zhao Changtian 赵长天: Dui *Mengya* 50 nian de huigu yu sikao 对《萌芽》50 年的回顾与思考. *Wenyi bao*, 10 October 2006, p. 2; Shang Fei 尚飞: Cong 'Xin Gainian' zuowen dao '*Mengya* shuxi'—*Mengya* zazhi zhubian Zhao Changtian fangtan 从《新概念》作文到《萌芽书系》—《萌芽》杂志主编赵长天访谈. *Bianji xuekan* 3 (2005), pp. 66–68.

calligraphy, and served as an important cultural venue that published essays and fiction aiming to educate the younger generation and to cultivate their revolutionary consciousness and nationalist sentiments.

As happened with many other literary journals, the publication of the magazine was interrupted by the beginning of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). In 1981, it resumed publication, and featured work by many established writers such as Lu Wenfu 陆文夫 (1927–2005), Su Tong 苏童 (b. 1963), Yan Lianke 阎连科 (b. 1958) and Chen Shixu 陈世旭 (b. 1947). Following the new trend of opening up to the Western world, *Budding* also featured brand-new columns such as translated foreign literature, mainly from the Anglophone world, and added a media-oriented supplement *Dianshi · dianying · wenxue* 电视 · 电影 · 文学 (Television · Film · Literature) to offer a comprehensive survey of foreign films and media products, mainly from Hollywood, to attract a new generation of young readers with the glamour of the visual media, and to nurture their cosmopolitan tastes.

In addition, the magazine started to award the annual '*Budding* Literary Prize' (*Mengya wenxuejiang* 萌芽文学奖), and collaborated with Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House to release the *Budding* Book Series (*Mengya shuxi* 萌芽书系), consisting of novels, collections of short stories, essays and poems authored by young prize-winners. However, these reformist measures turned out to be insufficient when all Chinese literary magazines were pushed towards the market in the 1990s and more forms of entertainment (e.g. TV shows, cinemas, bars, discos, karaoke clubs and so on) became available to Chinese citizens. The radical reduction of government subsidies meant there was increasing pressure on Chinese literary publishers to make profits in order to achieve financial autonomy (*zifu yingkui* 自负盈亏) in the thriving market economy. In the face of such a daunting task in a post-revolutionary 'cultural revolution,' Zhao Changtian 赵长天 (1947–2013), the chief editor of Budding from 1995, realized that they should aim at transforming the magazine into a cultural arena and a theatrical stage built by youth and for youth with the intention of expanding the youth book market.[6]

At the same time, on the educational front, a lively debate concerning the reform of Chinese language teaching (*yuwen jiaoyu gaige da taolun* 语文教育改革大讨论) was also going on. This great debate was first triggered by a set of essays published under the umbrella title 'Shiji guancha · Yousi Zhongguo yuwen jiaoyu' 世纪观察 · 忧思中国语文教育 (A centennial observation: Anxieties over Chinese language teaching) in *Beijing wenxue* 北京文学 (Beijing literature) in 1997, including 'Nü'er de zuoye' 女儿的作业 (My daughter's homework) by Zou Jingzhi 邹静之 (b. 1952), a famous playwright who was also the father of a middle-school student; 'Wenxue jiaoyu de bei'ai' 文学教育的悲哀 (The sadness of literary education) by Xue Yi 薛毅, a college teacher in a Department of Chinese; and 'Zhongxue yuwen jiaoyu shouji' 中学语文教育手记 (Teaching notes from a high-school Chinese class) by Wang Li 王丽, a teacher in a Beijing elite high school.

6 Shang Fei, Cong 'Xin Gainian' zuowen dao '*Mengya* shuxi', pp. 66–68.

These articles brought together a long list of existing problems in the teaching of Chinese language, including rigid grading criteria, the over-politicization of literature and the way it is taught in the classroom, overwhelming emphasis on the 'uplifting' narrative tone and 'healthy' content of students' writings, intensive test-oriented training and the consequent narrowing of reading tastes. Zou Jingzhi commented that today's youngsters, including college students, had read even fewer literary classics than the 'sent-down youth' during the Cultural Revolution, because those books were not viewed as instrumental for achieving high scores in exams.[7] As a result, young students have lost the ability to appreciate and create aesthetically refined literary works that are far removed from the mainstream ideology.

In order to redress this unsatisfactory situation, these critics called for reform of the outmoded methodology and content of Chinese teaching in the classroom setting so that subsequent generations could learn to develop a more sophisticated taste for literary works, to articulate their opinions openly and freely, and to express their feelings in a more honest, personable, and creative manner.

Immediately following its release, this set of provocative essays was reprinted and commented on widely in the press, for example in *Zhongguo qingnian bao* 中国青年报 (China youth daily), *Wenyi bao* 文艺报 (Literature and art news), and *Xinmin wanbao* 新民晚报 (Xinmin evening post). To carry this debate forward, in December *Beijing Literature* organized a conference continuing the conversation about Chinese language teaching. Lasting from 1997 to 2000, this nationwide discussion resulted in the publication of a series of books on both sides of the debate, such as *Zhongguo yuwen jiaoyu yousi lu* 中国语文教育忧思录 (Anxieties over Chinese language teaching, 1998), *Shenshi zhongxue yuwen jiaoyu* 审视中学语文教育 (Interrogating Chinese teaching in secondary schools, 1999), *Qi ren you shi* 杞人忧师 (Foolish worries about education, 1999), and *Wenti yu duice—Ye tan Zhongguo yuwen jiaoyu* 问题与对策—也谈中国语文教育 (Issues and solutions: Further discussion on the subject of Chinese language teaching, 2000).[8]

Many renowned writers, intellectuals, scholars and professors of Chinese language and literature took advantage of this trend to call for a total overhaul of the way Chinese was taught. According to these outspoken critics, regimented Chinese language teaching creates a generation who knows nothing about the beauty of Chinese language and literature. Instead, these youngsters only know how to reproduce clichéd expressions, and the artificial but politically correct narratives characterized by 'false, grand and empty' (*jia da kong* 假大空) rhetoric to get high scores in exams. More intriguingly, Xue Yi, using the examples of pop songs, as well as works by San Mao 三毛 (1943–1991) and Qiong Yao 琼瑶 (b. 1938), two bestselling Taiwanese women writers, contended that rather than the stale methods used to

7 Zou Jingzhi 邹静之: Nü'er de zuoye 女儿的作业. *Beijing Wenxue* 11 (1997), p. 6

8 Cao Hongshun曹洪顺: Shiji zhi jiao de yuwen jiaoyu da taolun pingshu 世纪之交的语文教育大讨论评述. In: Zhongxue yuwen jiaoxue cankao bianji bu 中学语文教学参考编辑部 (ed.): *Xin shiji yuwen jiaoxue gaige yu tansuo* 新世纪语文教学改革与探索. Xi'an: Shaanxi Normal University Press 2001.

teach Chinese in the education system, popular literature and culture had played an essential role in providing youngsters with an alternative vocabulary, free from didactic moralism, in which to express their honest thoughts and inner feelings and to explore an unorthodox literary space outside of the classroom.[9]

Riding on the waves both of literary commercialization and education reform, Zhao Changtian launched a new writing contest particularly aimed at discovering and cultivating talented young writers to supply manuscripts for the literary magazine *Budding*.[10] He joined forces with highly influential writers, scholars, and cultural bureaucrats such as Wang Meng 王蒙 (b. 1934), the former Minister of Culture, who agreed to serve as the Chair of the New Concept Composition Contest Committee, and Tong Qingbing 童庆炳 (1936–2015), a well-established professor and literary critic based at Beijing Normal University, to boost the prestige of the contest. Countering what had been described as the 'false, grand and empty' rhetoric in young students' Chinese compositions, the writing contest is called Xin Gainian 新概念, or New Concept, after the bestselling English language textbook, *Longman New Concept English*.[11] When the contest was announced, it was stated that its aim was to breathe new life into young students' creative writing by restoring the central significance of 'the expression of authentic feelings.' On the other hand, it was also a survival strategy adopted by Zhao to rescue the literary magazine from a crisis which saw sales plummet to fewer than 10,000 in the 1990s. In this sense, the name can also be interpreted as a 'new concept' of literary publication in the face of rapid marketization. The contest proved a phenomenal success and miraculously boosted the sales of the magazine to more than 500,000 copies by the end of 2004.[12] The first volume of a collection of New Concept prizewinning pieces sold more than 560,000 copies.[13] With the now widespread use of new media among the younger generations, *Budding* also launched its own website Mengya.com to create a 'cradle of youth literature' (*qingchun wenxue jiayuan* 青春文学家园) for its young readers.

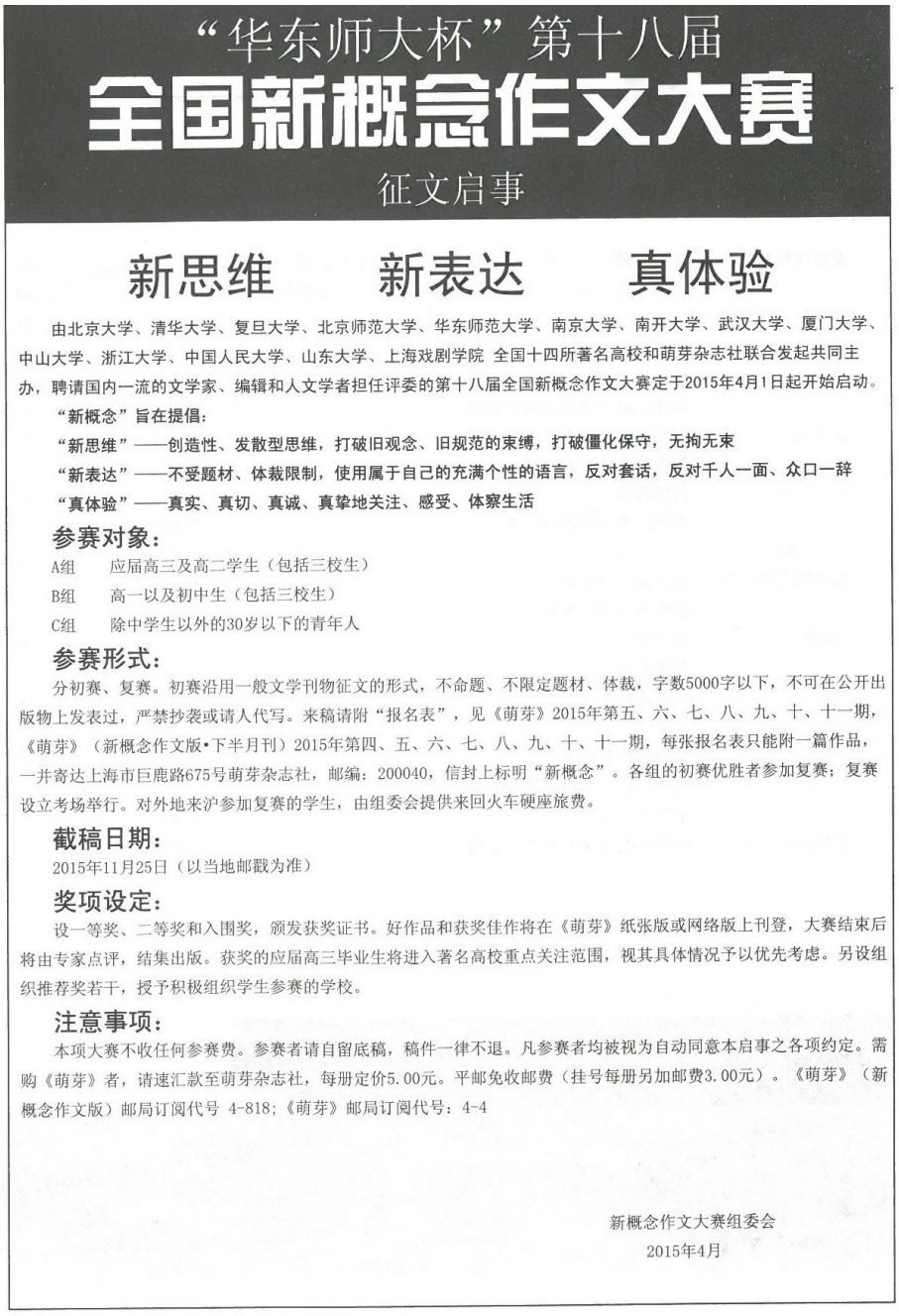
9 Bi Yi薛毅: Wenxue jiaoyu de bei'ai 文学教育的悲哀. *Beijing Wenxue* 11 (1997), p. 16.

10 Zhao Changtian, Dui *Mengya* 50 nian de huigu yu sikao; Sun Yue孙悦: 'Xin gainian zuowen dasai' shi ruhe mengya de 《新概念作文大赛》是如何萌芽的. *Bianji xuekan* 4 (2008), pp. 61–65.

11 Sun Yue, 'Xin gainian zuowen dasai' shi ruhe mengya de.

12 Shang Fei, Cong 'Xin Gainian' zuowen dao '*Mengya* shuxi'.

13 Shuyu Kong, *Consuming Literature*, p. 50.



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2015年4月

Figure 1: The official announcement of the 2015 New Concept Composition Contest, published in *Budding* (June 2015).

Starting from 1998, the annual writing contest has now been held for eighteen years in succession (see Figure 1 for the latest announcement for the 2015 contest). Since its inauguration, the New Concept contest has attracted tens of thousands of young contestants from all over the country and from overseas Chinese communities. Many of its winners have gained overnight fame, direct admission into prestigious universities, and a cult-like status among young readers of the magazine.[14] Not surprisingly, the two most prominent and controversial of the many winners have been Han Han and Guo Jingming. In the following section, I will offer a textual analysis of their winning pieces of writing in the contest and show how these represent a new *Budding* style that, in the spirit of the Chinese language teaching reform, engages in a seemingly unlikely dialogue with the May Fourth literary revolution.

The *Budding* Style: A Lighter Version of the Literary Revolution?

Commenting on contemporary Chinese writers, Wang Anyi 王安忆 (b. 1954), a prominent woman writer and also the Deputy Chair of the Shanghai Writers' Association, has pointed out that there exists an unbridgeable gap (*duanceng* 断层) between different generations. According to her, while the post-1970 generation (*qiling hou* 70 后, i.e. those born in the 1970s) writers are still acceptable within mainstream literary history, the post-1980 generation writers have completely exiled themselves from the orthodox tradition consisting of a series of widely read literary canons.[15] This interesting generalization about generational politics in the contemporary Chinese literary scene begs the question: What does Wang Anyi mean by literary canons? To infer from the literary traditions in which Wang's writings are embedded, we can safely conclude that they refer to the foreign and Chinese literary classics endorsed and promoted as fundamental works in mainstream literary history, including the nineteenth-century European realist novel, twentieth-century modernist fiction, the late imperial Chinese novel, and modern Chinese literature since the May Fourth movement.

At first sight, Wang's observation about the post-1980 generation of writers, whose works have often been regarded as vulgar and shallow, appears to be quite true and has been echoed by a number of writers, literary critics and scholars. However, I would argue that the distance between the canon of May Fourth literature and the Me Generation writings is not as far as generally assumed. Pushed forward by the combined forces of the Chinese language teaching reform and literary marketization, the works of Me Generation writers, starting from their prize-winning essays in the New Concept writing contest, are not only enabling the fledgling genre of youth literature (*qingchun wenxue* 青春文学) to flourish, but also creating a new

14 Li Yang 李阳: *Mengya* de zhuanxing yu Guo Jingming de chuxian 《萌芽》的转型与郭敬明的出现. *Dangdai Zuojia Pinglun* 1 (2011), pp. 127–29. Sun Yue, 'Xin gainian zuowen dasai' shi ruhe mengya de.

15 Wang Anyi 王安忆: Wo bu gan ping 80 hou zuojia 我不敢评80后作家. *Beijing Qingnian Bao*, March 9, 2009.

writing style and literary subjectivity that is consciously situated at the margin of the literary establishment. Their stylistic and thematic explorations break the orthodox literary mold and challenge the mainstream values of the grown-up world. In this sense, their writings appear as a light variation on the May Fourth literary revolution. Of course, situated at a drastically different historical juncture—with the prevalent commercialization of Chinese literary publication and book culture, and targeting a different group of readers—urban-based young students rather than reform-minded Enlightenment intellectuals, the New Concept writing style can be viewed more as a commercialized youth-oriented cultural product than as the ideological conveyor of the sublime Enlightenment ideals of the May Fourth generation.

To investigate this seemingly improbable link between the Me Generation youth literature and the May Fourth literary revolution, we need to go back to the New Concept Composition Contest and its main advocates. As the 'New Concept' announcement above makes clear, *Budding* has collaborated with fourteen prestigious Chinese universities all over the country, including Beijing University, Tsinghua University, Nankai University and Fudan University, to increase the influence and authority of the writing contest. Although they span eighteen years, the core ideas of New Concept contests have not changed much.

In the 2015 contest announcement, these ideas are printed in bold type: *Xin siwei* 新思维 (New thought), *Xin biaoda* 新表达 (New expression), *Zhen tiyan* 真体验 (True feelings). In the passage below, the organizer explains the three terms further: 'New thought' means breaking away from the constraints of old ideas and obsolete rules in order to encourage more literary creativity; 'New expression' means shaking off generic clichés and stale expressions to construct individual styles; 'True feelings' means following one's heart to present sincere and authentic observations, expressions, and feelings about one's real life. These core guidelines not only echo the main advocate of the reform of Chinese language education at the turn of the century, but are also reminiscent of Hu Shi's 胡适 (1891–1962) famous essay *Wenxue gailiang chuyi* 文学改良刍议 (Some modest proposals for the reform of literature), which was published in 1917 in *Xin qingnian* 新青年 (New youth). Hu called for a literary reform, which, in his opinion, should conform to the following eight rules:

1. Writing should have substance
2. Do not imitate the ancients
3. Emphasize the technique of writing
4. Do not moan without an illness
5. Eliminate hackneyed and formal language
6. Do not use allusions
7. Do not use parallelism
8. Do not avoid vulgar diction[16]

16 Hu Shi 胡适: Wenxue gailiang huyi文学改良刍议. *Xin Qingnian* 2.5 (1917). The English translation appears in Kirk Denton (ed.): *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893–1945*.

In their efforts to push forward the vernacular literary movement, the May Fourth writers and intellectuals strove to break with the literature of the past and establish a new style that could express individual opinions and feelings without the use of hackneyed language, traditional formalism and allusions to classical literature. In this sense, the New Concept writing contest can be viewed as a continuation of the May Fourth literary legacy, particularly in its search for more thematic and stylistic innovations and the encouragement it offers for fresh expressions of individual feelings.

Following this line, we can understand why Guo Jingming and Han Han stood out among the tens of thousands of young contestants to win the praise of senior writers, such as Wang Meng, Fang Fang 方方 (b. 1955), Ye Zhaoyan 叶兆言 (b. 1957) who served on the panel of judges. A close reading of their writings in the contest reveals a new *Budding* style that broke with the conventional pattern of classroom writings to connect with the May Fourth literary revolution in several different ways.

For example, Han Han's prize-winning essay 'Bei zhong kui ren' 杯中窥人 (Peeping at humanity through a glass, 1999)[17] violates the sacred rule of writing about grand ideals and a bright future as encouraged by school teachers in the classroom setting. Elevating the trivial to the abstract, this essay chooses a crinkled ball of paper in a glass as a central trope for the dark side of the humanity, which highlights the desublimated aesthetics of Han's later writings. The very first sentence in the essay announces the unabashed literary ambition of the seventeen-year-old to carry on the May Fourth mission of reflecting critically upon Chinese traditions: 'The human nature that I want to interrogate in this essay is the base "national character" (*minzu liegen xing* 民族劣根性) of the Chinese. Mr Lu Xun did not discussed it thoroughly, so I'd like to pick up where he left off.'[18]

In the following nine paragraphs of this short essay, Han Han compares the slow sinking of the paper ball in a glass of water to the gradual degeneration of mankind, particularly Chinese citizens, in a society full of problems, corruption, deceit, hypocrisy, and moral ambiguities. To support this rather thin argument, he quotes widely from miscellaneous sources ranging from contemporary publications such as *Zawen bao* 杂文报 (Weekly review)[19] and *Wenhui Bao* 文汇报 (Wenhui daily) to traditional texts such as *San zi jing* 三字经 (The three character classic, a popular children's primer in imperial China), *She hua lu* 舌华录 (Collection of brilliant remarks, 1615, a Ming-dynasty *biji* 笔记 novel by Cao Chen 曹臣, 1583–1647)

Stanford: Stanford University Press 1996, pp. 123–24.

17 Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

18 Han Han 韩寒: Bei zhong kui ren 杯中窥人. *Xiao zuojia xuankan* 6 (2007), p. 13.

19 *Zawen Bao* was published between 1983 and 2014 in Hebei. It was the only newspaper in China that mainly published *zawen* (literally, miscellaneous essays), a literary genre made famous by Lu Xun, who authored hundreds of *zawen* essays to make biting commentaries on social ills. The characters used to compose the name of the newspaper were picked from the handwriting of Lu Xun. To further underline Lu Xun's influence, the newspaper organized a writing contest called 'Lu Xun feng' 鲁迅风 (Lu Xun style) that took place between 1987 and 1988.

and includes a smattering of Latin. Han Han's familiarity with classical Chinese literature, in addition to his pungent social critique packaged in a semi-classical style (again reminiscent of Lu Xun's style), went far beyond the normal scope of knowledge of Chinese high school students, and thus won the endorsement of the New Concept contest judges.

In comparison to Han Han, Guo Jingming's creative writings show more traces of the growing pains and pleasures of his generation in a media-saturated world. Guo Jingming's winning essay 'Juben' 剧本 (Screenplay, 2000) is a piece of fully mediatized literary writing. As its title indicates, the essay follows the format of a film script, with abundant montage sequences that can be easily adapted from the linguistic to the visual medium. The opening paragraph reads: 'The image starts with a black screen. All of a sudden a beam of bright light shines over a jaded man from above. He looks calm, or numb, to put it more precisely. Then a deep voice off-screen starts to tell a story: "I forgot to drink Madame Meng's Tea of Forgetfulness (*Meng Po tang* 孟婆汤) in my previous life, so I still have some lingering strange memories that make my current life confusing....".'[20]

Unlike Han Han, who consciously imitates the sardonic style of Lu Xun and Qian Zhongshu 钱钟书 (1910–1998), Guo Jingming writes in a more straightforward and colloquial manner, mainly in shorter sentences and with profuse allusions to contemporary Taiwan and Hong Kong popular writers and filmmakers such as Qiong Yao, Lilian Lee (Li Bihua 李碧华, b. 1959), and Wong Kar-wai 王家卫 (b. 1958). The only Republican-era writer Guo ever mentions is Eileen Chang 张爱玲 (1920–1995). Guo's writings often resonate with Chang's, with his fondness for depicting individual feelings, fragmented sensory experiences in an overwhelming metropolitan environment, and the guilty pleasures of the urban material life.

However, similar to Han Han and to a certain degree to Han Han's literary idol Lu Xun, Guo Jingming also paints a gloomy picture of everyday life. His works are marked by the doubts and ironies of the adult world and its established values. In his winning essay 'Screenplay,' Guo interweaves two narrative threads, a skill comparable to parallel editing in filmmaking, to compare and contrast two different life choices imagined by a troubled first-person narrator: either as an obedient child, living up to his parents' expectations, and having a stable but boring life—which meant he would have to work hard to get into college and then find a well-paid job; or as a young poet-cum-rock star whose efforts to seek an alternative lifestyle in a throw-away society could only end in tragedy. After juxtaposing the divergent life paths and describing the dreadful death of the rebellious 'angry young man', Guo then switches back to the first-person narrative and marvels: 'Who'd have thought that the hidden life of

20 In Chinese folklore, Madame Meng's Tea of Forgetfulness, or *Meng Po tang*, is said to be served by Madame Meng to those about to embark on a journey to the netherworld. Once they drink the tea, they will forget everything that transpired in their previous lives.

an excellent student like me could make such a horror film once it is written down? How shocking is that!'[21]

Although Guo Jingming never shows any particular liking for Lu Xun's writings, the dystopian portrayal of the mainstream culture, the depiction of the tragic fate of those who try to break out of the institutionalized prison of 'normal' life, and the thoroughly dark tone of narration all remind readers of Lu Xun's most influential piece *Kuangren riji* 狂人日记 (A madman's diary, 1918) published on the eve of the May Fourth Movement. Like Lu Xun's first vernacular piece, Guo's writing also has a ghostly atmosphere, and is haunted by a schizophrenic narrator, the horror of death and everyday violence, the spectre of a vaguely remembered past, and a profound youthful distrust of mainstream values and ideologies.

Han Han's and Guo Jingming's writings share a highly negative narrative core and an exploration of alternative literary styles. Their individualized expressions of biting social comment and feelings of disillusionment conjure up the central imagery of the oxymoronic 'old youth' (*lao qingchun* 老青春), or a young generation who feel world-weary psychologically even before they grow up. Their depiction of this youthful anomie has become a stylistic trademark of a prominent new aesthetics of the Me Generation's writings published in *Budding*, which stands in stark contrast to the traditionally promoted 'false, grand, and empty' mainstream model that had been criticized in the Chinese language teaching reform. This new *Budding* style continues the May Fourth anti-establishment spirit, while rewriting the image of a forward-looking 'New Youth' informed by the Enlightenment discourse and holding a firm belief in rupturing old traditions to initiate historical progress. In addition, it forms an ambivalent relationship with the most recent governmental discourse of the China Dream, on which I will elaborate further in the following sections.

A Transnational and Transmedial Youth Book Culture

Having gained fame virtually overnight via the New Concept writing contest, Han Han and Guo Jingming used their glory as a springboard to launch their literary careers as professional writers. While still finishing his first year at high school, Han Han published his first novel *San zhong men* 三重门 (Triple door, 2000).[22] Revolving around a middle-school student's

21 Guo Jingming 郭敬明: Juben 剧本. In: Han Han 韩寒 et al.: *10 nian xin gainian: '80 hou' de wenzi liliang* 10 年新概念:'80后'的文字力量. Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe 2008, p. 20.

22 According to Han Han's explanation, the novel's title means 'three most important things', in allusion to *Zhongyong* 中庸 (The doctrine of the Mean). The first line of the 29th chapter of this Confucian classic is '*wang tianxia you san zhong yan, qi gua guo yi hu!* 王天下有三重焉，其寡过矣乎 ！' (' He who attains to the sovereignty of the kingdom, having those three important things, shall be able to effect that there shall be few errors under his government'. English translation from *Zhongguo jingdian dianziban gongcheng* 中国经典电子版工程, ebooks of Chinese Classics, http://www.cnculture.net/ebook/jing/sishu/Zhongyong_En.html, 3 October 2016). For Han Han's explanation, see Han Han

dilemma in choosing between pursuing his literary dream and cramming to pass the entrance exam for an elite high school, this book shows how the rigid education system and cutthroat academic competition have imposed enormous pressure upon millions of Chinese youngsters born after the implementation of the 'One Child' policy. In her book, Vanessa Fong presents an ethnography of the Me Generation teenagers who have enjoyed better living standards but at the same time have also been subjected to the pressure of higher parental expectations for their academic success .[23]

Touching the most sensitive nerve among his contemporaries, youngsters who are disaffected with the education system, Han Han's first novel became an instant bestseller upon its release. Up to this point, it has been reprinted 45 times and sold more than five million copies.[24] In 2001, it was also adapted into a TV drama. After failing six courses and dropping out of high school, Han rejected an offer of admission from the Chinese Department of Fudan University and decided to become a freelance writer cum racing-car driver. Following the phenomenal success of *Triple Door*, he has published several other novels, a dozen collections of short stories and a number of essays, all of which have been fervently received by his young fans, who admire his nonconformist star image as much as his satirical literary style. More importantly, Han has gained a 'bad boy' reputation in the literary arena for his bold attacks on some senior heavyweights in China's cultural establishment such as Bai Ye 白烨 (b. 1952), Lu Tianming 陆天明 (b. 1943), and Wang Meng, a fact that signals the crumbling of the old order of the literary world.[25] In 2006, in his Sina blog[26] he started publishing provocative essays criticizing the widespread corruption, hypocrisy, and incompetence of the Chinese government. The blog has become one of the most frequently visited blogs in the world.[27] The polemical content and sarcastic style of his controversial essays commenting on current affairs earned the young man the title of 'Lu Xun of contemporary China' (*dangdai Lu Xun* 当代鲁迅) and catalyzed his metamorphosis from a bestseller writer into a public intellectual.[28]

韩寒: Zhengchang wenzhang yi pian 正常文章一篇. 18 January 2012. http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4701280b0102e061.html (3 October 2016).

23 Vanessa Fong: *The Only Hope*: *Coming of Age under China's One-Child Policy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.

24 Cai Zhen 蔡震: 'Quanqiu zuiju yingxiangli 100 ren' pingxuan: Han Han de piao jin baiwan 《全球最具影响力100人》评选：韩寒得票近百万. *Yangzi Wanbao*, 30 April 2010. http://www.chinanews.com/cul/news/2010/04-30/2255937.shtml (8 August 2016).

25 Zhang Qinghua: Carnival and Sadness: Impressions of Chinese Literature in the 21st Century. Translated by Yongan Wu. *World Literature Today* 81:4 (2007), p. 19; Julia Lovell: Finding a Place: Mainland Chinese Fiction in the 2000s. *Journal of Asian Studies* 71:1 (2012), p. 13.

26 http://blog.sina.com.cn/twocold.

27 Lovell, Finding a Place.

28 Han Han's controversial new title has stirred heated public debate online. For instance, a whole forum on Sohu.com, one of the biggest news portals in China, is centred around the topic 'Han Han: The Next

In 2010, taking advantage of the new fad of publishing in the new media for young readers, Han Han edited the online literary magazine *Duchang tuan* 独唱团 (Party), which immediately climbed to the top of the Chinese Amazon bestseller list, but was quickly banned after the inaugural issue due to its publication of some politically sensitive articles.[29] In the same year, Han Han was selected as one of the '100 Most Influential People in the World' by *Time* magazine.[30] Two years later, he launched another electronic literary magazine, *Yige* 一个 (One), which is more like an app, again in the rapidly expanding forum of the new media. This new e-journal can be viewed as a continuation of the earlier Party, although its content is less politicized and more entertainment-oriented.

In 2013, Han Han wrote the screenplay and directed the film *Houhui wuqi* 后会无期 (*The continent*, 2014), which again painted a dystopian picture of contemporary Chinese society and a lost generation of aimlessly wandering youngsters. Jia Zhangke 贾樟柯 (b. 1970), a Sixth-Generation filmmaker famous for his 'post-socialist realism'[31] in portraying a rapidly transforming China, showed his support by playing a cameo character in Han's directorial debut. However, unlike Jia Zhangke's films, that are either banned or poorly received by Chinese audiences, Han Han's star appeal among his young fans also earned his first film extraordinary box office revenue.[32]

Winning first place in the New Concept contest two years after Han Han, Guo Jingming has had a fairly similar career path to Han Han's, but with fewer political provocations. The commonality shared by the two Me Generation writers is their transmedial practices and their unprecedented commercial success in a changing book culture. Even before the New Concept contest, Guo Jingming had published many of his creative writings under the pen name 'The Fourth Dimension' (*di si wei* 第四维) at Rongshuxia.com, one of the earliest commercial portals for amateur literary publications. After winning the New Concept prize, Guo published *Ai yu tong de bianyuan* 爱与痛的边缘 (Between love and pain), a collection of confessional essays about his 'growing pains' in which the author emerges as a split subject caught between pursuing his literary aspirations and fulfilling his parents' expectations, a

Lu Xun?' (Han Han: Xia yi ge Lu Xun? 韩寒:下一个鲁迅？) http://news.sohu.com/s2009/hanhan/ (10 July, 2016).

29 Han Han *Duchang tuan* di er ji chuban lao dongjia cheng qi neng 'reshi' 韩寒《独唱团》第二辑出版老东家称其能'惹事'. *Qilu Wanbao,* 27 December 2010. http://ent.ifeng.com/idolnews/mainland/detail_2010_12/27/3712467_0.shtml (8 August 2016).

30 Simon Elegant: Han Han in *The 2010 Time 100,* 29 April, 2010. http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1984685_1984940_1985515,00.html (10 July, 2016).

31 Jason McGrath: The Independent Cinema of Jia Zhangke: From Postsocialist Realism to a Transnational Aesthetic. In: Zhen Zhang (ed.): *The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema and Society at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*. Durham, N.C. and London: Duke University Press 2007, pp. 81–114.

32 Liu Ting 刘婷/Ma Yu马彧: *Houhui wuqi* shangying 3 tian piaofang po 2 yi 《后会无期》上映3天票房破2亿. *Yangzi Wanbao*, 28 July 2014. http://gb.cri.cn/27564/2014/07/28/108s4631586.htm (8 August 2016).

youngster's quandary also depicted in Han Han's novel *Triple Door* and many other similar stories published in Budding.[33]

Shortly after this, Guo Jingming published his first novel, *Huan cheng* 幻城 (Ice fantasy). It first appeared in a shorter version in *Budding*, and dramatically boosted the sales of the magazine. Combining formulaic elements of romance, martial arts, witchcraft, and fantasy, *Ice Fantasy* became wildly popular among young readers thanks to its unrestrained imagination of a fantasized world that has little to do with the dull everyday reality that exhausted youngsters have to endure day in and day out. Some senior writers such as Cao Wenxuan 曹文轩 (b. 1954) and Ye Xin 叶辛 (b. 1949) applauded the novel's innovative style and its intricate plot line.[34] In 2003, Guo Jingming revised and expanded the *Budding* version and re-published *Ice Fantasy* as a book-length novel.[35] Since then, it has been reprinted several times and has sold millions of copies.

After dropping out of Shanghai University, Guo Jingming published several more best-selling novels and made himself one of the richest writers in mainland China.[36] In 2004, he and some of his friends collaborated with the Shenyang-based Chunfeng Literature and Art Publishing House[37], which had published his first novel *Ice Fantasy*, to found the *Dao* 岛 (i5land) Studio in Shanghai and release a series of youth-oriented books.[38] Later, Guo Jingming expanded the studio into the company Ke'ai Cultural Communication Ltd (Shanghai ke'ai wenhua chuanbo youxian gongsi 上海柯艾文化传播有限公司), which in 2010 became Shanghai Zui Culture Development Co Ltd (Shanghai zuishi wenhua fazhan youxian gongsi 上海最市文化发展有限公司), a media conglomerate that not only owns a series of chart-topping youth-oriented literary magazines such as *Zui xiaoshuo* 最小说 (Top novel), *Zui manhua* 最漫画 (Top manga), *Fangke hou* 放课后 (After school), and *Wenyi fengshang* 文艺风赏 (Art and literature appreciation), but also invests heavily in the making and marketing of youth-oriented media products. Competing directly with *Budding*, the privately-owned literary magazine *Top Novel*, edited by Guo himself, also runs its own writing contest and aims to cultivate its own writers from young people, for young people, and about young people. Guo Jingming often serializes his own works in *Top Novel* to boost its sales, a common practice among Republican-era Shanghai-based journalists-cum-writers.

33 Guo Jingming 郭敬明: *Ai yu tong de bianyuan* 爱与痛的边缘. Shanghai: Dongfang chuban zhongxin, 2002.

34 Zhang Jie 张洁: Guo Jingming: xiao shencai, da zhihui 郭敬明: 小身材大智慧. *Renwu zhoukan* 2 (2014), pp. 32–39.

35 Guo Jingming 郭敬明: *Huan cheng* 幻城. Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe 2003.

36 Wang Jigao 王继高: Pu Guo Jingming cheng zui fu zuojia 曝郭敬明成最富作家. *Huaxi Dushi Bao* 14 November 2013. http://news.xinhuanet.com/book/2013-11/14/c_125699848.htm (8 August 2016).

37 For a full discussion about how the publisher successfully self-transformed into a machine for producing literary best sellers, see Shuyu Kong: *Consuming Literature*, particularly Chapter 2.

38 Zhang Jie, Guo Jingming: Xiao shencai, da zhihui.

The unusual career paths of Guo Jingming and Han Han have been shaped by the converging forces of economic, social and cultural transformation experienced by the generations born after the 1980s. As a result of the economic reforms and the implementation of the 'One Child' policy, the increasing concentration of family financial and affective investment is providing this generation with better material conditions and educational opportunities. Growing up in an age of 'opening up' and globalization, the Me Generation writers have been deeply embedded in a network of transnational youth culture. Words, texts, images, media and cultural products travelling across national, linguistic and cultural borders not only reshape the cultural imagination of youth identities, but also help to generate new cultural icons and aesthetic tastes for younger generations. In this sense, the Me Generation creative activities appear as an intimate link in a global youth culture.

In the following section Guo Jingming's *Xiao shidai* 小时代 (Tiny times) is presented as a case study. This bestselling trilogy of novels centres on the experiences of four Shanghai girls as they grow to adulthood and face a series of challenges, including love triangles, betrayals, dysfunctional families, competition for jobs, and business conspiracies. Starting in 2007, the first instalment of *Tiny Times* was published in *Top Novel*. Then this part was released in book form by the Wuhan-based Yangtze River Literature and Art Publishing House in 2008 and became the top bestseller of the year.[39] Due to its popularity, even *Renmin wenxue* 人民文学 (People's literature), the official literary magazine of the Writers' Association of China since 1949, offered to publish the second part of the series in 2009. Later on, the Beijing-based People's Literature Publishing House, the most authoritative state-owned publisher, released the full-length book version.

After the extraordinary commercial success and official endorsement of this series, *Tiny Times* was re-issued as a multi-volume series of *manga* (*manhua* 漫画), a genre of pop culture imported from Japan and warmly received by Chinese urban youth. The strong influence of Japanese *manga* culture is shown not only in the illustration style of the comic series, but also in the ambiguous depiction of the homosocial, or homoerotic, relationships of the main characters in the novel, which feeds into the recent *danmei* 耽美 craze. The term *danmei* (tanbi in Japanese) is imported from Japanese youth culture. It means, literally, 'addicted to beauty,' and is used to refer to male-male homoerotic fiction, which has gained an enormous following among young female readers in Japan, China and East Asia in general.[40]

Following its multiple adaptations into a musical, a video game and a TV drama, Guo Jingming brought the literary text to the silver screen between 2013 and 2015. The film series (in four instalments) broke several box office records. While the first three instalments made more than RMB 1.3 billion (approximately USD 217 million) altogether, the last instalment

39 Zhang Jie, Guo Jingming: Xiao shencai, da zhihui; Jinying wang 金鹰网 (Hunan TV): Guo Jingming zhongbang tuichu *Xiao shidai* xiaoliang quanguo diyi 郭敬明重磅推出‘小时代’销量全国第一. http://ent.hunantv.com/y/20081206/129314.html (10 July, 2016).

40 For a full discussion of this popular genre, see Jin Feng: *Romancing the Internet: Producing and Consuming Chinese Web Romance*. Leiden and Boston: Brill 2013.

garnered more than RMB 200 million (approximately USD 33.3 million USD) in the first two days after its release, making *Tiny Times* the highest-grossing film series in Chinese film history.[41]

The film adaptation of *Tiny Times* features an international crew and cast. It was produced by Angie Chai (Chai Zhiping 柴智屏, b. 1962), the 'godmother' of Taiwanese youth culture, who not only produced what was arguably the first pop idol TV drama, *Liuxing huayuan* 流星花园 (Meteor garden), in 2001, but also successfully adapted the bestselling youth novel into a popular film, *Naxie nian women yiqi zhui de nühai* 那些年我们一起追的女孩 (You are the apple of my eye, 2011). In addition to Angie Chai, the film's actors come from mainland China, Taiwan and Britain, and include Kai Ko, who gained overnight fame among Chinese-speaking communities for his leading role in Chai's earlier film *You Are the Apple of My Eye*.

The transnational nature of the film is also reflected in the multilingual nature of the film series. Though based in Shanghai, the languages spoken in the film are Mandarin and English rather than the local dialect. Capitalizing on Chinese youth's passion for global consumer culture and its lingua franca, English, the film series sets up a dialogic relationship with multiple popular media products, particularly those produced in the United States, such as *Friends*, *Sex and the City*, *Gossip Girls*, *The Devil Wears Prada*, *Fifty Shades of Grey* and so on, demonstrating the mobility and ubiquity of a youth subculture and its transnational consumerist aesthetics. Although some of these titles are not publicly shown in China, bootleg DVDs and numerous video streaming sites have made them easily accessible to urban youth.

The huge success of the youth films (*qingchun pian* 青春片) directed by Guo Jingming and Han Han is an indication of the latest developments in the Chinese film industry. As a result of a changing Chinese film market and audience demographics, the youth film has replaced the 'Happy New Year film' (*hesui pian* 贺岁片) as a lucrative new genre that has driven Chinese box office revenues to a historic high. Instead of traditional family holidays such as the Spring Festival, the summer break has become the most lucrative time of the year due to the decreasing average age of movie goers and the increasing purchasing power of young students.[42] In 2015, multiple youth films, including the last instalment of *Tiny Times*, were released in the summer break. As a result, box office revenues for the month of July

41 Sina 新浪: *Xiao Shidai* chuang guochan 2D dianying kaihua jilu 《小时代》创国产2D电影开画纪录. 29 June 2013. http://ent.sina.com.cn/m/c/2013-06-29/10493952927.shtml (6 January 2016); Xiao Wei 小微: *Xiao Shidai* piaofang leiji 15.1 yi, po Huayu xilie dianying jilu '小时代' 票房累计15.1亿，破华语系列电影纪录. *Zhongguo Ribao* (*China Daily*), 11 July 2015. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/hqcj/xfly/2015-07-11/content_13963183.html (6 January 2016).

42 Ying Zhu and Frances Hisgen: A Rite of Passage to Nowhere: 'Tiny Times,' Chinese Cinema, and Chinese Women. *China File* (15 July 2013), http://www.chinafile.com/rite-passage-nowhere (6 January 2016).

surpassed the total for the whole of 2014.[43] Thanks to the large number of young filmgoers, mostly concentrated in urban areas, the youth film has become a staple genre of summer blockbusters, a trend quite similar to recent developments in the Hollywood film industry.

Moreover, the terms 'IP' (intellectual property) and 'bookworm economy' (*shuchong jingji* 书虫经济) have become very popular in cultural and economic arenas.[44] In the context of the restructuring Chinese film industry, IP refers to those popular literary works that have already been so well-received by young readers, often via the Internet, that they have already accumulated enormous social and economic capital as appealing brands and cultural icons even before their filmic adaptations. Therefore, a related term 'bookworm economy' has been coined to describe the new investment strategy that aims to maximize potential profit by targeting the young fans of the original literary work, a common practice in today's Hollywood, where it is exemplified by the film adaptations of the Harry Potter series, the Hunger Games trilogy and so on. As one of the pioneers of this IP investment and 'bookworm economy,' Guo Jingming has successfully made the *Tiny Times* film series, and is currently preparing for the film adaptation of his other bestselling fantasy novels including *Ice Fantasy* and *L.O.R.D.* ('Lord of the Ravaging Dynasties', or *Jue ji* 爵迹, 'mark of the cavalier') as the next big investment by his media company, Shanghai Zui Culture Development.

The China Dream, Youth Economy, and Crisis

This new youth-oriented book and media culture has spawned a new audience, new market, new genre, new idols and new transmedial experiments. The prosperity of this new book culture indicates the rise of a youth economy, or an economic mode not only capitalizing on the increasing purchasing power of young readers or the transmedial creativity of young writers, but also re-packaging 'youth' (*qingchun* 青春) as its most profitable commodity for sale on a transnational cultural market. In a media-saturated cultural milieu, the spectacle of youth has become a utopian imagination in a dystopian society where youngsters are entrapped in banal, everyday reality, facing cutthroat competition from kindergarten onwards, and escalating social inequalities in a radically transforming society. As a consequence of this thriving youth economy, we have witnessed the unprecedented commercial success of a new generation of writers-filmmakers-entrepreneurs in various cultural and media industries, which seems to attest to the recent official promotion of the China Dream discourse that aims to conjure up the image of a rising China on a global stage.

43 Liu Qing 柳青: 2015 Zhongguo dianying piaofang 440 yi 2015中国电影票房 440亿. *Chongqing Wanbao*, 2 January 2016. http://media.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0102/c40606-28003687.html (8 August 2016).

44 Liu Qing, 2015 Zhongguo dianying piaofang 440 yi; 'Shuchong jingji' shaore wenhua quan '书虫经济' 烧热文化圈. *Sichuan Ribao*. 24 April 2015. http://www.chinanews.com/cul/2015/04-24/7232202.shtml (8 August 2016).

Xi Jinping first proposed the idea of the 'China Dream' in 2012, soon after his visit to an exhibition called 'Road to Revival' (*Fuxing zhilu* 复兴之路) at the National Museum in Beijing. Invoking the 'century of humiliation' caused by imperialist invasion starting from the First Opium War (1839–1842), he specifically put the idea of a 'China Dream' into a global context:

> Nowadays, everyone (*dajia*) is discussing the Chinese Dream. What is the Chinese Dream? In my view, to achieve the great revival of the Chinese nation (*zhonghua minzu*) is the grandest Chinese dream (*Zhongguo meng*) of the Chinese nation (*zhonghua minzu*) in the modern era. For the long-cherished wishes of many generations are combined and embodied in this dream, which manifests the integrated well-being of the Chinese people, and is the common wish of every single son and daughter of China. History tells us that the fate of every one of us is closely connected to the state (*guojia*) and the nation (*minzu*). Only when the state is well and the nation is well can everyone be well.[45]

Later, the term has been explained more succinctly in his writings as 'achieving a rich and powerful country, the revitalization of the nation, and the people's happiness.'[46]

This latest official slogan of the China Dream celebrates a rising China and constructs a futuristic temporality. On the national level, the dream is described as China's aspiration to prosperity and rejuvenation. On the individual level, it aims to promote the achievement of success through individual effort. To get the message across to the younger generations, in 2013 President Xi directly addressed young people on *Qingnian jie* 青年节 (Youth daily), a national holiday celebrating the legacy of the May Fourth movement, asking them to strive to contribute to the fulfilment of this future-oriented China Dream. He said: 'A nation will be prosperous if its young generation is ambitious and reliable,' and then added: 'Young people should emancipate the mind, advance with the times, forge ahead and innovate so as to gather experience and make achievements.'[47]

This most recent state-sanctioned China Dream discourse combines a nurturing of young people' nationalist sentiments with advocacy of the neoliberal market logic of achieving individual success through self-struggle and career advancement. Replacing the New Youth spirit of participatory politics, public engagement, and social activism, this new discourse

45 Quoted in Fan Yang: The Chinese Dream: A Global-National Ideological Formation. In: Zala Volcic/Mark Andrejevic (eds): *Commercial Nationalism: Selling the Nation and Nationalizing the Sell*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming, p. 4.

46 Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi 中共中央文献研究室 (ed.): *Xi Jinping guanyu shixian Zhonghua minzu weida fuxing de Zhongguo Meng lunshu gaobian* 习近平关于实现中华民族伟大复兴的中国梦论述摘编. Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe 2013, p. 5. Quoted in William A. Callahan: History: Tradition and the China Dream: Socialist Modernization in the World of Great Harmony. *Journal of Contemporary China* 24:96 (2015), p. 2.

47 Yang Yi (editor): Youth Urged to Contribute to Realization of 'Chinese Dream'. Xinhuanet, 4 May 2013. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-05/04/c_132359537.htm (11 November 2015).

economicizes China's younger generations by emphasizing individual competition and professional achievement in a state-sanctioned market economy.

In view of this, it is no wonder that Guo Jingming was singled out for praise by the Guangzhou-based South China Media Group for so successfully turning himself into an entrepreneur. *Nanfang Zhoumo* 南方周末 (Southern China weekly), a liberal newspaper famous for its exposés of government corruption, gave an elaborate answer to the question of why Guo was selected:

> Born in a remote little town in Southwest China, Guo Jingming was one of the most ordinary 'second generation of average Chinese citizens' (*min erdai* 民二代). He grasped the small opportunities (*xiao jiyu* 小机遇) in a great era (*da shidai* 大时代) to launch his career in the mega-city (*chaoji da duhui* 超级大都会) and created his own 'tiny times' (*xiao shidai* 小时代). He is a writer, publisher, film director, and also an entrepreneur. The cultural products Guo Jingming creates caress and titillate the lost souls of the youngsters. He becomes the spokesperson for young readers' yearnings and shapes their tastes. He is extremely controversial, yet indisputably influential. One thing that is sure is that he has made himself a glamorous young icon of the 'second generation of nouveau riche' (*fu yidai* 富二代).[48]

This tribute, published in *Southern China Weekly*, is a good summary of Guo's meteoric rise to the pinnacle of fame and wealth in China's most internationalized and futuristic city. His self-transformation from a *min erdai to a fu yidai* runs counter to the stark reality of widespread corruption and social inequality that bring unmatched privileges to *fu erdai* 富二代 (children of nouveaux riches) and *guan erdai* 官二代 (children of government officials). In this sense, his unusual success story would seem to attest to the futuristic rosy picture at the core of the ongoing China Dream discourse, which promises the younger generation unlimited opportunities of self-fulfilment and upward mobility within the socialist market economy.

However, a closer examination of today's youth culture often reveals a strong sense of crisis and nostalgia for the past, which forms a counterpoint with the future-oriented discourse of the China Dream. For example, at the very beginning of his *Tiny Times*, often described as kitsch for its obsessive descriptions of an opulent mall culture as well as Chinese youth's unabashed materialistic pursuits, Guo actually draws a fragmented and dystopian picture of Shanghai, the epicentre of China's modernization and globalization:

> The cover story of the latest issue of *People and Time* is 'Shanghai and Hong Kong: Which City Will Be the Financial Centre of the Future?'—Beijing has lagged far behind, not to mention Taipei's sluggish economy that is on the cusp of collapse.
>
> Every day countless people flood into this fast-spinning city—with their grand plans, or bubbly daydreams; every day countless people leave this cold concrete jungle of skyscrapers—the only thing left behind is their tears.

48 Guancha 观察: Guo Jingming Huo *Nanfang Zhoumo* Zhongguo Meng Jianxingzhe 郭敬明获南方周末中国梦践行者. Guancha.cn, 15 December 2013. http://www.guancha.cn/culture/2013_12_15_192736.shtml (11 November 2015).

> Carrying their Marc Jacobs[49] handbags, young office ladies elbow their way out of the noisy crowd in the subway station. Despite their 4-inch high heels, they speed up the station stairs. Covering their noses and rolling their eyes, they run past beggars in rags. In the hallways of office buildings, there are endless lines of interviewees. Every ten minutes, a young member of staff steps out of the office, and throws a pile of résumés into the trashcan.
>
> In Starbucks, countless Asian-looking people push open the glass doors and hurriedly leave with their take-out coffee bags in hand. Some of them talk on the phone while they take their coffee out of the bag and hurriedly drink it; while others gingerly carry the bags to board black sedans waiting at the curb and rush off to their supervisors' offices. In stark contrast, Caucasian-looking people sit leisurely inside Starbucks. They idle around, squinting to browse through the *Shanghai Daily*[50] or laughing loudly over the phone, asking: 'What about your holiday?'[51]
>
> In the cluster of international designer brand boutiques snaking from suites Nos. 1 to 18 on the Bund, shop assistants look cold-faced. Occasionally, one or two women in huge sunglasses nonchalantly finger items on the racks, quickly looking them over. Their movements are so feeble it is as if the commodity had been sprinkled with poison. Seeing this, all the shop assistants are suddenly energized, like dead bodies coming back to life. But before they have the chance to rush over and promote their goods, the client suddenly lets go of the clothes and the garment swings instantly back into place next to the rest of the clothes hanging tightly-packed on the rack. In these luxury boutiques on the Bund, clients are always outnumbered by shop assistants, because the belief is that one customer must be served by five assistants at the same time. Meanwhile, on the riverside avenue across the street from the Bund, countless provincial tourists hold their cameras high to fight for the perfect spot for snapping photos. Wearing boring outfits sold by the cheap, large chain stores, they shout 'Look here! Look here!' in a wide range of accents. The distance between them and the luxurious world across the street is only twenty metres.
>
> In an old *nongtang* 弄堂 (back alley), women take their chamber pots to the public toilets, with their hair dishevelled after a night's sleep and their eyes revealing inconsolable resentment and discontent accumulated over the years.
>
> At No. 8, Jinan Road, a row of luxury sedans wait patiently to pick up rich ladies who have just spent three hours grooming themselves carefully only for an afternoon tea.
>
> This is a city that is leaping forward at the speed of light. Whirling desires and mushrooming opportunities have transformed the city into a labyrinthine space as disorienting and complicated as an underground maze.
>
> This is an age as cold and sharp as a dagger, which digs out hole after hole in people's hearts and then buries ticking time-bombs in them. The ever-widening gulf between the extremes of wealth and poverty has rapidly polarized society and has torn everyone's soul in half. We are lying still in our small beds. We are so trivial and worthless that we are virtually nothing.[52]

Just as in Guo's winning essay for the New Concept writing contest, the style of his serialized fiction is also highly mediatized. The lengthy quote above is taken from the first page of the *Tiny Times* trilogy. Similar to an establishing shot in a film, this panoramic opening sets the stage—the cosmopolitan city of Shanghai—for the main characters of the novel. In this

49 The brand-name is in English in the original Chinese text.
50 The newspaper title is in English in the original Chinese text.
51 The question is in English in the original Chinese text.
52 Guo Jingming 郭敬明: *Xiao shidai* 小时代, vol. 1, pp. 1–2. Thanks go to Evan McCormick for his invaluable comments on my translation.

urban space, remapped and re-imagined in an age of globalization, the *nongtang* and old-style vernacular architecture portrayed in Wang Anyi's Shanghai-themed novel *Changhen ge* 长恨歌 (*The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*) have disappeared from the spotlight, a forgotten corner left behind by the unprecedented urban development.[53] Instead, the capital-intensive Bund is seen as the heartland of Shanghai, a city famous for its boutiques selling international designer brands in a 'concrete jungle,' and its clusters of monumental but impersonal skyscrapers representing both Shanghai's growing transnational economy and a cosmopolitan culture centred on urban investment and consumption.

The panoramic depiction of the urban space consists of a series of fast-edited montage sequences. These jump cuts break the temporal continuity and juxtapose together a pastiche of fragmented spaces. This montage style is reminiscent of the earlier Shanghai-based New Sensationalist (*xin ganjuepai* 新感觉派) literature of the Republican era, particularly *Shanghai hubuwu: Yige duanpian* 上海狐步舞：一个断片 (The Shanghai foxtrot: A fragment, 1932) by Mu Shiying 穆时英 (1912–1940), which also placed side by side the rich and poor, foreign and Chinese, traditional and modern, cosmopolitan and provincial.[54]

On the surface, these kaleidoscopic bits and pieces of urban spaces and city dwellers' sensory experiences seem to be completely disconnected and contradictory and to cancel each other out. However, they are symbiotically related and closely bound together by the force of globalization: we see foreigners idly sipping their coffee in Starbucks, enjoying their leisure time, while Chinese white-collar workers are rushing to their offices because they cannot afford to lose a single minute. In a separate time and space, anonymous crowds of young people stand in a long line, aspiring to join the ranks of Chinese white-collar workers. Employment with a transnational corporation means the acquisition of financial capital with which to buy global commodities in the boutiques on the Bund, and the realization of the economic worth of their youthful bodies. However, due to the cutthroat market competition and the unequal division of labour on both a local and a global scale, the resumés of most of the aspiring youths land in the trashcan, just like the beggars on the street, and they are left behind by the fast-forwarding times. Meanwhile, tourists from other parts of China flood into Shanghai to window shop for luxury brands they can never afford to buy. Their curiosity and shock at the urban spectacle in the Bund also constitute an essential part of the affective map of the city, which demarcates different sensory and bodily experiences of the urban spectacle along lines of race, class, age, gender, and region.

In contrast to the illusion of equality supposedly brought about by the de-territorialization of transnational capital and commodity flows, this new urban landscape of Shanghai in an age of globalization shows us more symptoms of glaring inequality, caused by the re-territorialization of labour and labourer. As a result, Guo's panoramic portrayal of a new

53 Wang Anyi 王安忆: *Changhen ge* 长恨歌. Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe 1996.

54 The Shanghai Foxtrot (a fragment), by Mu Shiying. Translated by Sean Macdonald. *Modernism/Modernity* 11.4 (2004), pp. 797–807.

Shanghai starts with the grand ambition of Shanghai to surpass Beijing, Taipei, and Hong Kong to become the financial centre of the future, but ends with individualized feelings of loss, alienation, anxiety and self-pity hidden beneath a glossy picture of the 'China Dream,' or, more precisely, the 'Shanghai Dream'.

With his trademark style of excess, Guo Jingming piles up a series of contrastive adjectives to describe the new generation's urban experiences in Shanghai: whirling, bubbly, cold, noisy, hurriedly, leisurely, sharp, resentful, and worthless. New and old, grand and trivial, quick and slow, abundant and empty, ambitious and decadent, all these keywords best sum up the 'new sensationalist' world of a new Shanghai full of temptations, desires, extravagances, frustrations, contradictions, and ruptures.

Trapped between progression and retrogression, development and stagnation, dreams and disillusionments, the spatial expansion and temporal progress suddenly halt, break, and fall into a claustrophobic space of 'small beds' where a worthless, nameless, and isolated young generation feel lost and barely protected by their daydreams. The abrupt jump cut to the 'small beds' suggests that the whole of the rest of the novel is just a youthful dream, a narrative technique reminiscent of Han Bangqing's 韩邦庆 (1856–1894) *Hai shang hua liezhuan* 海上花列传 (Flowers of Shanghai, 1892), which also depicts the city's decadent pleasures and the degradation of youth at the turn of the nineteenth century with a cyclical structure that starts and ends with a dream.[55]

However, the youthful dreamscape in *Tiny Times* is not future-oriented like the China Dream. Instead, it is painted as a nightmarish picture of 'youth noir'. Following the anti-climactic first page quoted above, throughout all three novels, the words *heise* 黑色 (black), *hei'an* 黑暗 (darkness), *fengli* 锋利 (sharp), *bingleng* 冰冷 (icy cold) and *beishang* 悲伤 (sadness, melancholy) appear on nearly every page, to emphasize the existential angst of youth. The rapidly forward-moving urban development does not guarantee the fulfilment of youthful aspirations, but turns the young soul into a 'ticking bomb' that will be blown to pieces with the passing of time.

Resonating with the dreamlike opening of *Tiny Times*, in the final chapter of the last book in the series a devastating, nightmarish fire devours the fictional characters as well as the illusion of urban splendour and the ephemeral happiness of youth. This represents a direct reference to an actual deadly blaze that occurred in a high-rise apartment building in Shanghai on 15 November 2010.[56] Such a dystopian representation of transitory urban prosperity and glamour makes Shanghai, the most futuristic city in China, truly a fantasy city, as in the literal translation of the title of his earlier novel *Ice Fantasy*, or *Huan cheng* 幻城 in Chinese.

55 Han Bangqing 韩邦庆: *Hai shang hua liezhuan* 海上花列传. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2006.

56 For news reports on this disaster, see Michael Wines/David Barboza: Fire Trips Alarms about China's Building Boom; Censors Respond. *New York Times*, 16 November 2010, p. A6; Xinhua (Xinhua News Agency): Shanghai High-Rise Fire Death Toll Rises to 58. Xinhuanet, 19 November 2010. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-11/19/c_13613065.htm (22 November 2015).

In the film adaptations, despite all the star images and high-fashion glamour, the young protagonists' love lives and sisterly friendship after high school are also depicted with unflinching honesty as a mass of dangerous liaisons, insidious schemes, deceitful transactions and betrayals, a miniature version of the egotistical and practical-minded adult world dominated by the unadorned logic of social Darwinism. Therefore, this bestselling youth trilogy and its film adaptations can be regarded as an anti-*Bildungsroman* narrative: Growing up does not necessarily bring maturity and self-fulfilment. Rather, it indicates wounds, death, trauma and degradation. It not only means the loss of youthful innocence but also the annihilation of all lofty ideals so that a young person can learn to play all the dirty tricks of the seamy grown-up world in order to get ahead at any cost.

Faced with such a bleak picture of a dystopian future where everyone is driven by the desire for fame and wealth, instead of looking forward, the younger generation tends to look back to imagine a possible future, to cast nostalgic glances at the past, the idyllic age of innocence and hope. The last passage of *Tiny Times* ends with the melancholy reminiscence of Lin Xiao 林萧, the only female protagonist who has survived the fire, about the days of innocence and sisterly bonding the girls shared when still at school.[57] If any impulse for the utopian imagination remains, it is not about growing up and embracing a better tomorrow, but about how to retrieve a coherent and innocent subject hidden in the memories of the past when cutthroat competition, social stratification and alienated labour are still lurking on the far horizon.

It must be emphasized that this sense of youth crisis and anti-*Bildungsroman* narrative is not unique to Guo Jingming, but has actually become a prevalent theme in recent youth-oriented literature and cinema. Despite the phenomenal commercial success of the new youth films and the prosperity of the ongoing youth economy, a closer reading of such youth-oriented films as *Zhi women zhongjiang shiqu de qingchun* 致我们终将逝去的青春 (To our youth that is fading away, 2013; directed by Zhao Wei 赵薇, b. 1976), Han Han's *Houhui wuqi*, and *Congcong nanian* 匆匆那年 (Back in time, 2014; directed by Zhang Yibai 张一白, b. 1963) reveals a profound sense of crisis and a common mood of nostalgia. Rather than promising a better tomorrow, the passing of time serves only to create a strong sense of anxiety over loss, aging, degeneration, and disintegration. Living in fear of the loss of ideals and an uncertain future, youth has become the only conceivable utopia to which it is possible to return. This mood of nostalgia has been so widespread that even the *People's Daily*, the mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party, published an editorial entitled 'The Post-80 Generation Is Dispirited: Early Decline Cause for Alarm!' ten days after China's Youth Day (4 May) in 2013. [58]

57 Guo Jingming, *Xiao shidai,* vol. 3, p. 359.

58 Bai Long 白龙: 80 hou muqi chenchen jingshen zaoshuai zhide jingti 80后暮气沉沉 精神'早衰'值得警惕. *Renmin Ribao,* 14 May 2013.

Conclusion

This chapter uses Guo Jingming and Han Han as case studies to show the ways in which shifting economic, social and cultural conditions have enabled the young writers of the Me Generation to tread a unique career path as they transitioning from bestseller writers to successful transmedial entrepreneurs. Born after China's economic reform and the introduction of the 'One Child' policy, the Me Generation youth have lived with concentrated familial investment and higher parental expectations. Elevated living standards and expanded educational resources have equipped them with better economic and cultural capital to compete in a roaring market economy. Reforms in the teaching of Chinese and the New Concept writing contest have provided them with unprecedented opportunities to create new styles and new genres that are passionately embraced by their young readers.

Moreover, the technological revolution, particularly the expanding coverage of new media, has also opened up an alternative venue for interactive communication, information dissemination and personalized expression, as well as a low-threshold forum for the younger generation's publication, circulation, consumption and discussion of literary works. The radical marketization and globalization of the Chinese culture industry further provide them with a stage on which they can not only fulfil their literary dreams but also build up their own media empires using their transmedial cultural and entrepreneurial practices.

However, a series of unsettling factors tend to undermine this glorious picture of fulfilling the China Dream for this younger generation. The transnational youth culture runs counter to the resounding nationalist rhetoric in the official China Dream discourse that aims to boost Chinese youths' patriotic feelings and loyalty to the indigenous culture. The expanding use of new media not only contributes to the Me Generation's commercial success, but also catalyzes the formation of a burgeoning public cultural sphere for their oppositional politics and publications. This media revolution is particularly significant because the formal public sphere is still much constrained in post-socialist China.

Unfortunately, the recent tightening of cultural control has further squeezed the limited virtual public sphere. While political activism and public engagement are off limits, it seems that in the ongoing China Dream campaign, both national rejuvenation and individual fulfilment can only be measured by economic success and wealth accumulation. This ideological schizophrenia between the state's single-minded pursuit of development and the official rhetoric of a promised socialist utopia results in a profound sense of confusion and loss of belief among the younger generations.

This sense of disorientation and disillusionment has been further enhanced by the unprecedented social transformation and massive dislocation caused by China's rapid economic expansion. More importantly, the escalating class stratification and the increased competitiveness of the past decade have made it more and more difficult for the youth to realize their dream of embourgeoisement. While the Me Generation has always been taught by their parents and school teachers that they can join the urban-based middle-class through

hard work, struggle, and competition in a global market economy, the prevalent corruption and rising rates of unemployment and underemployment of college graduates make such a middle-class dream seem out of reach for the average Chinese youth who is not a *fu erdai* or *guan erdai*.

Therefore, in the new youth-oriented book and media culture, we see a dominant anti-*Bildungsroman* narrative depicting an uncertain future and a cluster of kaleidoscopic but disconnected time-spaces. When everything solid melts into air, everything whole has become fragmented, and there is no grand narrative to redeem the emptiness of the trivialized individual, decadence and melancholia pervade youth literature, and the spectacle of eternal youth, perpetuated in a capital-dominated youth economy becomes the only imaginable utopia in a dystopian world.

In place of the politically charged image of forward-looking New Youth striving to bring a future utopia into the present, in the current youth-oriented cultural products churned out by youth writers-filmmakers-entrepreneurs such as Guo Jingming and Han Han we see signs of a deep sense of crisis and nostalgia for the fantasy of an idealized past. In this sense, the most two important Me Generation writers of the youth book culture can be seen as both the beneficiaries and the critics of the ongoing development of China's cultural industry and market economy, and their bestselling works eloquently reveal the prosperity and the crisis of a new youth culture marked by a series of conflicting themes including change vs. stasis, construction vs. demolition, memory vs. erasure, aspiration vs. nostalgia, and dream vs. disillusionment.

9
Sex and the Glocalising City: Women Writers as Transcultural Travellers in Postsocialist Chinese Literature, 1997–2016

Daria Berg and Rui Kunze

Introduction

This chapter aims to explore how China's new authors tackle the themes of gender, transcultural travel, cosmopolitanism and the glocalising cityscape—combining both globalising and localizing trends—in postsocialist China (1997–present).[1] The 1990s witnessed the economic, sexual and digital revolutions. At the end of the decade a new generation of writers began to tackle hitherto taboo subjects such as sex, drugs, and youth suicide.[2] Tourism and travel abroad also began to feature as themes in the 1990s, and the focus appeared to shift onto the cityscape on a global stage. The cityscape—as both a local and global, a native and foreign place—came to epitomise ultramodernity, glamour and globalisation and emerged into the literary limelight.

This study focuses on two women writers—Wei Hui 衛慧 (*alias* Zhou Weihui 周衛慧, b. 1973) and Chun Shu 春樹 (*alias* Zou Nan 鄒楠, b. 1983)—as case studies to show how their works debate the economic boom and its trappings, the new dreams, nightmares, anxieties and aspirations in the glocalising city. Wei Hui and Chun Shun inscribe a discourse on sex and the glocalising city into China's popular culture. Both writers present a gendered perspective on China's new urban culture from a female point of view. Here we attempt to explore how two young women writers construct the trope of the transcultural woman traveller within the imagined glocal cityscape. The concept of the traveller is derived from James Clifford's use of the term.[3] Here the trope of the transcultural traveller appears in the shape of a mainland Chinese female protagonist who travels to a foreign city on a quest for adventure.

1 Daria Berg would like to thank Giorgio Strafella for his invaluable comments and meticulous editing. On postsocialism, see Introduction, and also Daria Berg: A New Spectacle in China's Mediasphere: A Cultural Reading of a Web-Based Reality Show from Shanghai. *The China Quarterly* 205 (2011), pp. 133–51, esp. p. 136.

2 Daria Berg: Consuming Secrets: China's New Print Culture at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century. In: Cynthia Brokaw/Christopher A. Reed (eds): *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition, circa 1800 to 2008*. Leiden: Brill 2010, pp. 315–32.

3 On the trope of the traveller, see James Clifford: *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1997.

The concept of transculturality in the present context follows Wolfgang Welsch in replacing the concepts of interculturality, multiculturality and globalisation.[4] Cultures no longer appear as homogenous, as islands or separate spheres, and do not become uniform the world over. As Welsch explains:

> If cultures were in fact still—as these concepts suggest—constituted in the form of islands or spheres, then one could neither rid oneself of, nor solve the problem of their coexistence and cooperation. However, the description of today's cultures as islands or spheres is factually incorrect and normatively deceptive. Cultures de facto no longer have the insinuated form of homogeneity and separateness. They have instead assumed a new form, which is to be called *transcultural* insofar that it *passes* through classical cultural boundaries. Cultural conditions today are largely characterized by mixes and permeations. The concept of transculturality... seeks to articulate this altered cultural constitution.[5]

Welsch draws on Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of culture 'as interaction with foreignness' which is 'at hand wherever practices in life are shared'.[6] Wittgenstein's concept of culture is 'open to new connections' and 'further feats of integration'.[7] According to Welsch, cultures 'today are generally characterized by hybridization'.[8] Transculturality in individuals denotes their combining a cosmopolitan side with a local affiliation. This links to 'glocal' trends, hybrid individuals and the trope of the transcultural traveller in our discussion.

This chapter analyses portrayals of Chinese women as transcultural travellers in New York in two novels from postsocialist China—Wei Hui's *Wode Chan* 我的禪 (hereafter: *Marrying Buddha*, 2004) and Chun Shu's *Guangnian zhi Meiguomeng* 光年之美國夢 (Light years: My American dream, 2010). Wei Hui rose to fame with her Shanghai-centred novel *Shanghai baobei* 上海寶貝 (Shanghai baby) published in 1999. Its Beijing counterpart, the bestselling novel *Beijing wawa* 北京娃娃 (Beijing doll) by Chun Shu appeared in 2002. The two earlier novels by these authors set the action in China's mega-cities Shanghai and Beijing. The two latter novels under discussion in this chapter move the main action to New York, with excursions to Shanghai and Beijing.

Urban life has reappeared as a conspicuous theme in postsocialist Chinese literature (1997-present). The city featured prominently in the literary discourse of the 1920s and 1930s[9], but as a bourgeois theme it fell out of fashion in Mao's new socialist narrative of China. The economic reforms under Deng Xiaoping from 1979 onwards entailed the rapid transformation of urban life in China. The rise of Shanghai and Beijing as China's new world

4 Wolfgang Welsch: Transculturality – the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today. In: Mike Featherstone/Scott Lash (eds): *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World.* London: Sage 1999, pp. 194–213, http://www2.uni-jena.de/welsch/, pp. 1–7 (01 August 2016).

5 Welsch, Transculturality, p. 3.

6 Welsch, Transculturality, p. 7.

7 Welsch, Transculturality, p. 7.

8 Welsch, Transculturality, p. 3.

9 See, e.g. Leo Ou-fan Lee: *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1999.

cities has brought the theme of city life back into the limelight in contemporary cultural discourse.[10] This study shows how the city appears as a symbol of ultramodernity in twenty-first century Chinese cultural imagination. The new literature does not limit portrayals of the cityscape to Chinese cities but adds a new focus on Chinese travellers to foreign cities. New York appears as the epitome of cosmopolitanism, testifying to a focus on transculturality and an obsession with the quest for cosmopolitanism from a Chinese perspective.

Three main factors have altered the dynamics of cultural production and consumption in contemporary China[11]: first, the influx of a globalising popular culture has merged cultural flows from Europe, the US and Japan—for example Japanese fiction and manga, and American TV shows—with local Chinese urban culture. The US multi-media narrative *Sex and the City* offers a prominent example of the transmedia and transcultural flows into China to be discussed in the present chapter. Second, the consumer revolution has entailed the rise of the commercial creative industries such as the alternative semi-official publishing industry, or 'Second Channel', which is not officially sanctioned but is to a certain extent tolerated in China.[12] China's new publishing industry is characterised by decentralisation, deregulation, and diversity. The Second Channel has made the emergence of the new authors and their writings about hitherto taboo subjects possible. It has also enabled the careers of new freelance writers—such as Wei Hui and Chun Shu—as cultural entrepreneurs. Third, the digital revolution has been brought about by the rise of the Internet, making China the world's largest web population with currently 688 million users and an Internet penetration rate of 50.3 per cent.[13] Web 2.0 technology facilitated the creation of blogs and microblogs, changing the dynamics of publishing. As a consequence new themes and new formats have appeared in Chinese popular culture.

One such theme is the emphasis on women as major players in China's new urban culture. Women appear in three new roles: as cultural producers they are authoring the new literature both in print and online; as cultural consumers, they are the main readership and target audience of the new literature and films[14]; and they also star as the main protagonists in China's new urban fiction and cinema. Women appeared as taking centre stage in the neon-light literature (*dushi nihong* 都市霓虹) or new urban fiction (*xin shimin xiaoshuo* 新

10 Daria Berg: *Portraying China's New Women Entrepreneurs: A Reading of Zhang Xin's Fiction*. Durham, UK: University of Durham 2000.

11 Berg: A New Spectacle in China's Mediasphere, pp. 133–51.

12 On the Second Channel, see Daria Berg: Publishing Industry. In: David Pong et al. (eds): *Encyclopedia of Modern China*. Detroit, MI: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2009, pp. 220–25.

13 See Zhongguo hulian wangluo xinxi zhongxin 中國互聯網絡信息中心 (CNNIC): Di 37 ci Zhongguo hulian wangluo fazhan zhuangkuang tongji baogao 第37次中國互聯網絡發展狀況統計報告, 19 April 2016. http://www1.cnnic.cn/IDR/ReportDownloads/201604/P020160419390562421055.pdf (18 July 2016).

14 See Berg, Consuming Secrets, pp. 315–32.

市民小說) of the 1980s and 1990s.[15] 'Neon-light literature' describes the rise of China's new entrepreneurs who strike out in the sea of free enterprise (*xia hai* 下海). Women entrepreneurs became the new heroines of fairy tale stories extolling China's new self-made millionaires, such as Zhang Xin's 張欣 (b. 1954) fiction.[16] This study discusses a gendered view of Chinese city life and cosmopolitanism by analyzing how the works of women writers celebrate a new type of economically and sexually empowered female protagonists on a global stage.

Literary critics in the 1980s began to celebrate women as symbolizing the spirit of China's rising world cities.[17] A new cultural discourse endowed the cityscape with feminine traits, as the new-found delights of the economic boom in China's mega-cities—notably Shanghai and Beijing—seemed to symbolise feminine seduction.[18] The new imagined Chinese cityscape thus combines three main elements: first, an affiliation with a globalising popular culture thriving on transcultural flows mainly from Japan, Europe and the US; second, an emphasis on localizing trends privileging indigenous tastes and fashions in cultural discourse; and third, the rise of women as symbols, protagonists and producers of a new Chinese brand of cosmopolitanism as an important element of the new urban culture.

This chapter argues that China's new women writers transform the discourse on the US import *Sex and the City* into a debate about women, sex and the city in postsocialist China, and that this epitomises a wider cultural debate on women's sexual revolution and economic emancipation. The mega-city as a mecca of consumerism provides the setting for the urban imaginary. The imagined cityscape functions as the stage for a new type of empowered woman writer—appearing as semi-autobiographical protagonists, first person narrators and implied authors. Women writers appear in the narratives not only as consumers but also as cultural entrepreneurs of postsocialist China, capitalizing on their new sexual and economic freedoms to maximise cultural capital and financial profit.[19]

The following divides into five main sections which discuss first, the lives and careers of the two women writers Wei Hui and Chun Shu; second, the quest for cosmopolitanism in China; third, a discussion of Wei Hui and Chun Shu's novels about women writers, transcultural travel and the glocalising city; fourth, the movement of trends across media and

15 Daria Berg: *Portraying China's New Women Entrepreneurs: A Reading of Zhang Xin's Fiction*. Durham, UK: Department of East Asian Studies, 2000.

16 Berg, *Portraying China's New Women Entrepreneurs*, pp. 1–22.

17 Berg, *Portraying China's New Women Entrepreneurs*, p. 8.

18 Berg, *Portraying China's New Women Entrepreneurs*, p. 8.

19 On cultural capital (the term is taken to include forms of knowledge, skills, education, any advantages that give a person higher social status, high expectations and cultural aspirations), see Pierre Bourdieu: Ökonomisches Kapital, kulturelles Kapital, soziales Kapital. In: Reinhard Kreckel (ed.): *Soziale Ungleichheiten (Soziale Welt, Sonderheft 2)*. Göttingen: Otto Schartz Co. 1983, pp. 183–98; on cultural capital in the context of women writers in traditional China, see Daria Berg: Female Self-Fashioning in Late Imperial China: How the Gentlewoman and the Courtesan Edited *Her* Story and Rewrote *Hi/*story. In: Daria Berg (ed.): *Reading China: Fiction, History and the Dynamics of Discourse—Essays in Honour of Professor Glen Dudbridge*, Leiden: E.J. Brill 2007, pp. 238–89.

cultures, using the US narrative of *Sex and the City* as an example; and fifth, travel writing in postsocialist China.

Two Women Writers

Chinese critics have associated both Wei Hui and Chun Shu with the new wave of 'body writing' (*shenti xiezuo* 身體寫作) at the turn of the twenty-first century, a literary vogue which emphasises women's private lives, eroticism and sexuality. Body writing has been defined as a narrative genre signifying the sensuality, sensitivity and focus on private experience in the works of the new wave of women writers.[20] Body writing denotes the use of the body as a site for sexual experimentation and a tool for writing, onto which a person's experiences and her writings can be inscribed both literally—as tattoos for example—and metaphorically as the person's private life becomes her literary canvas. Other body writers include Mian Mian 棉棉 (*alias* Wang Shen王莘, b. 1970) whose fictional narratives such as her novel *Tang* 糖 (Candy, 1999) debate sexuality, teenage suicide and drug abuse; Muzi Mei 木子美 (*alias* Li Li 李麗, b. 1978) who became notorious for her sex blog; Jiu Dan 九丹 (*alias* Zhu Ziping 朱子屏, b. 1968) who wrote about prostitution among Chinese students in Singapore; and Hong Ying 虹影 (b. 1962) who published erotic, autobiographical and historical fiction abroad.

Fudan University professor Ge Hongbing 葛紅兵 coined the term 'body writing' in a critique of Wei Hui and Mian Mian in 1999. Although the majority of body writers are female, the concept does not necessarily carry gender specific overtones: Ge Hongbing himself for example earned fame for his semi-autobiographical novel *Shachuang* 沙床 (Love and illusion, literally 'Sand bed') as China's first 'male body writer'. Berg has described body writing and its link with the earlier trend of privacy literature elsewhere.[21] The female authors however distance themselves from this label and insist their writings differ from autobiography.[22] Since these authors have marketed their writings as consumer products, using their bodies—on book covers and in the press—to advertise their works, they have also been described as 'beauty writers' (*meinü zuojia* 美女作家) or 'glamour writers'.

The novels by Wei Hui and Chun Shu portray the protagonists as members of a new imagined community of international youths by emphasizing the roles of sex, drugs, rock and punk music, graffiti, and fashions such as glaringly dyed hair as part of a global lifestyle. Chun Shu associates her novel with the theme of 'cruel youth'.[23] Margaret Hillenbrand has analysed the notion of cosmopolitanism in fiction such as Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby,* Chun

20 Zhang Kun: Bodies melting into words, *Shanghai Star*, 4 December 2003. http://app1.chinadaily.com.cn/star/2003/1204/fo5-1.html (13 July 2016).

21 Berg, Consuming Secrets, pp. 316-18.

22 Cf. Shuyu Kong: *Consuming Literature: Best Sellers and the Commercialization of Literary Production in Contemporary China.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2004, pp. 114–19.

23 Chun Shu: *Beijing Doll. A Novel*, trans. Howard Goldblatt. London: Abacus 2004, p. vi.

Shu's *Beijing Doll* and Mian Mian's *Candy* as responses to Japanese author Murakami Haruki in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.[24] Hillenbrand notes that Murakami's rendering of 'cruel youth' in his fiction, in particular the bestselling novel *Norwegian Wood* 'informs the deep structure of *Shanghai Baby, Candy*, and *Beijing Doll*, shaping emplotment, theme, and ethos.'[25] Chun Shu's novel links the theme of cruel youth to the concept of cosmopolitanism. 'Cosmopolitanism for the "pretty women writers",' Hillenbrand concludes, 'means crude entry into the "cruel youth" lifestyle: It is about learning the ropes, not customizing the details; it is raw content rather than aesthetic presentation.'[26]

Wei Hui

The author Zhou Weihui, better known by her personal name Wei Hui (Protector of wisdom)[27], was born in Yuyao, Zhejiang province, in 1973, and grew up in and around Shanghai. She thus belongs to China's Generation X (*xinxin renlei* 新新人類), children born in the 1970s who grew up at the end of or after the Mao years and the Cultural Revolution and have no personal memories of that era.[28] They were teenagers at the time of the Tiananmen Student Movement in 1989 and experienced Deng Xiaoping's reforms and consumer revolution. In 1995 Wei Hui, the daughter of an army officer, graduated from the Department of Chinese Literature at Fudan University, one of China's elite universities, in Shanghai. As a free-lance writer—a new phenomenon in post-Mao China—she followed in the footsteps of Wang Shuo, one of the first bestselling free-lance writers who became famous with his works of hooligan fiction (*liumang wenxue* 流氓文學; *pizi wenxue* 痞子文學) in the 1980s.[29]

Wei Hui's breakthrough novel *Shanghai Baby* was first published in China in September 1999 by the Beijing office of Harbin publishing house Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe 春風文藝出版社 (Spring Breeze Art and Literature).[30] An instant bestseller, it sold about half a million copies within six months. In April 2000 Wei Hui went on a national book launch tour and resorted to a provocative strategy to promote her novel by partly exposing herself during a press conference in Chengdu, Sichuan.[31] Her action sold privacy literature and body

24 Margaret Hillenbrand: Murakami Haruki in Greater China: Creative Responses and the Quest for Cosmopolitanism. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68:3 (2009), pp. 715–47, p. 733.

25 Hillenbrand, Murakami, p. 733.

26 Hillenbrand, Murakami, pp. 734–35.

27 This section is based on Berg, Consuming Secrets, pp. 318–20.

28 Sheldon Lu: *Chinese Modernity and Global Biopolitics: Studies in Literature and Visual Culture*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press 2007, p. 53.

29 On Wang Shuo, see Geremie Barmé: Wang Shuo and Liumang ('Hooligan') Culture. *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 28 (1992), pp. 23–64.

30 The authorial signature and dates appended to the main text of the Hong Kong edition mark the novel as a product of the period around the Hong Kong handover in 1997, since it appears to show that the first draft was completed in June 1996 and the final manuscript in July 1999; see Wei Hui: *Shanghai baobei*. Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu youxian gongsi 2000, p. 32 and p. 296.

31 Kong Shuyu, *Consuming Literature*, p. 110.

writing to the press and the public by literally imprinting the image of her body onto her story. The women's magazine *Wutai yu rensheng* 舞台與人生 (Life on stage) covered the story in detail for public consumption. Both in her fiction and in her ways of promoting it, Wei Hui turns privacy inside out for profit and claims that she 'no longer wishes to conceal anything.'[32]

This event evidently led the Chinese authorities to ban the novel later that month. They pulped the remaining 40,000 copies and ordered the publishers to close their Beijing office. An Boshun 安波舜 (b. 1957), editor-in-chief of Spring Breeze Art and Literature Publishing House, explains that the book was banned because of 'sex descriptions which had a negative influence on juveniles.'[33] Others cite the references to Sylvia Plath's poem 'Daddy' in *Shanghai Baby* as the reason that triggered the official ban.[34] An Boshun was forced to resign as editor-in-chief in May 2000 and his publishing enterprise was suspended for eight months, resuming publication in 2001.[35]

Although the ban has been reported by the press, no original official document has come to light so far. This begs the question of whether perhaps the publishers, or even the author, engineered it as a publicity stunt. News in the press added both notoriety and publicity. Wei Hui herself boasts about the censorship of her novel on her website.[36] The novel continued to circulate on the Internet, in Greater China and abroad. It became an international bestseller with rights sold in eighteen countries, selling 200,000 copies in Japan alone within a year.

In 2003 Wei Hui spent some time at Columbia University to research her next novel *Marrying Buddha*. In 2005 and 2006 copies of *Marrying Buddha* sold openly in the PRC, although the author claims she had to self-censor her manuscript in order to publish it there.[37] This, too, sounds like a good way to advertise a new novel, adding the aura of notoriety and implicit scandal while building on the success of a previous banned bestseller. In the absence of an 'original' complete manuscript, it is difficult to assess the extent of any literary self-censorship.[38] Certain outside pressures such as literary conventions, or market-driven or publisher-driven directives causing self-censorship may always be involved in cultural production to some degree.

32 Postscript to *Shanghai baobei*, cf. Kong, *Consuming Literature*, p. 112. This does not appear in the Hong Kong edition.

33 Zhang Kun: Bodies.

34 Jeanne Hong Zhang: *The Invention of a Discourse: Women's Poetry from Contemporary China*. Leiden: CNWS Publications 2004, p. 195.

35 Kong, *Consuming Literature*, p. 55.

36 Wei Hui: Homepage. http://goldnets.myrice.com/wh/ (24 January 2006). The link does not work anymore.

37 Berg, Consuming Secrets, p. 320.

38 Compare, for example, the case of Jia Pingwa's 賈平娃 (b. 1952) novel *Feidu* 廢都 (Abandoned capital, 1993): http://www.danwei.org/books/jia_pingwas_abandoned_capital.php (16 August 2016).

The commercial success of *Shanghai Baby* enabled Wei Hui to buy an apartment in Manhattan.[39] She subsequently divided her time between Shanghai and New York. Like *Shanghai Baby*, *Marrying Buddha* features the same first-person narrator named CoCo, a bestselling writer and globetrotter who travels to New York. This book did not attract as much attention in China or abroad as *Shanghai Baby*, but was also translated into English. After publishing an even less successful novel entitled *Gou baba* 狗爸爸 (Dog dad, 2007), Wei Hui disappeared from the mediasphere. She was rumoured to have had a car accident that left her in a coma for a while and later to have converted to Buddhism.[40]

Chun Shu

Zou Nan writes under the pen name of Chun Shu (also rendered in English as Chun Sue). Her pen name alludes to the Japanese cult writer Murakami Haruki, as the characters for *chun shu* 春樹 (literally: spring tree) are pronounced *haruki* in Japanese. The bestselling Japanese author thus appears as a foreign model for the young Chinese woman writer's literary aspirations.[41] Born in rural Shandong in 1983, Chun Shu belongs to China's post-eighties generation (*baling hou* 八零後), or Generation Y, children born and raised during the era of Deng Xiaoping's reforms. She also belongs to the first generation affected by the family planning policy often referred to as the 'one child policy'.[42] Chun Shu defines her generation as a new generation of individualists: 'People born in the 1970s are concerned about how to make money, how to enjoy life. But people born in the 1980s care more about self-expression, how to choose a path that fits one's own individual identity.'[43]

Aged eight, Chun Shu moved to Beijing when her father was posted there in the army.[44] She dropped out of high school in 2000 at the age of sixteen to become a free-lance writer, forging a career as a novelist, poet, blogger, rock music aficionado and travel writer. In May 2002, when she was nineteen, she published her first novel *Beijing Doll*, written when she was seventeen.[45] The title appears to allude to *Shanghai Baby,* providing a Beijing counterpart to Wei Hui's novel while setting the characters into an even younger generation. *Beijing Doll*

39 Berg, Consuming Secrets, p. 329.

40 Daria Berg/Rui Kunze: Interview with Mian Mian. Shanghai, 22 June 2015. See also Peijin Chen: The End of the Shanghai Baby? Shanghaiist, 17 May 2007. http://shanghaiist.com/2007/05/17/the_end_of_the.php (13 July 2016).

41 Cf. Lu, *Chinese Modernity*, p. 63.

42 On the family planning policy, see Vanessa L. Fong: China's One-Child Policy and the Empowerment of Urban Daughters. *American Anthropologist* 104:4 (2002), pp.1098–109.

43 Zhao Chenxi: From Punk to Environmentalist – the Return of Chun Shu, All-China Women's Federation, 30 July 2010, http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/people/writers/10/8535-1.htm (26 June 2016).

44 Wu Hongfei 吴虹飛: Chun Shu: Wei pengke nühai 春樹：偽朋克女孩. *Gaozhongsheng* 7 (2008), pp. 16–17.

45 Antoaneta Bezlova: China's new female writers captivate world. *Asia Times (Online)*, 16 January 2003. http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/EA16Ad01.html (18 July 2016).

depicts this younger generation's pursuit of a new cosmopolitan identity in Beijing through participation in China's new consumer culture and youth culture.

The Chinese government banned *Beijing Doll* two months after its publication, possibly due to its references to drug culture, teenage self-harm, suicide and a sexually liberated lifestyle.[46] The book ban turned Chun Shu's notoriety back home into fame abroad.[47] *Beijing Doll* received international praise at the 2005 Frankfurt Book Fair, was issued in English translation in the US and UK, and had its rights sold to over twenty countries.[48]

Chun Shu achieved international visibility in February 2004 when she featured on the cover of *Time* magazine (Asia) as a representative of China's 'new radicals' and a symbol of the new alternative (*linglei* 另類) post-eighties generation.[49] She received national and international prizes and distinctions, including, in the same year, the Golden Finger of the Internet Culture Pioneer Award at the Fifth Internet Golden Finger Conference. In June 2004, she appeared on the cover of China's leading cultural magazine *Sanlian shenghuo zhoukan* 三聯生活週刊 (Sanlian Life Weekly; or Lifeweek). In September 2004 she participated in the Oslo International Poetry Festival in Norway.

In 2007 she published another novel entitled *Hong Haizi* 紅孩子 (Red kid). She published her first collection of poetry entitled *Yiji qing wanzhang* 激情萬丈 (A ray of passion) in 2008, when she was twenty-five. In 2010, she visited the US and published *Light Years* which is set in New York and based on her American experience. She married in 2012 and currently lives with her husband and son in Berlin.

The year 2013 saw the publication of her poetry collection *Chun Shu de shi* 春樹的詩 (Chun Shu's poetry) and also a volume of her travel writings entitled *Zai diqiu shang: Chun Shu lüxing biji* 在地球上：春樹旅行筆記 (On the earth: Chun Shu's travel notes). In this travelogue Chun Shu narrates her experiences in New York, mentioning a Chinese American friend called Victor; her accommodation with Ms. Liu in the latter's apartment on Wall Street; a female friend who works in a rock club and provides Chun Shu with accommodation in China Town; and an encounter with a New Yorker named Anthony, with whom she stayed in his parents' house. All these elements have parallels in *Light Years*, suggesting that the novel contains autobiographical elements.[50]

46 See Yu Youyou 余幼幼: Chun Shu: Ziyou shi wo de xinyang 春樹：自由是我的信仰. *Qingnian zuojia* 12 (2014), pp. 5–9; Howard Goldblatt: Preface. In: Chun Sue: *Beijing Doll*. New York: Riverhead 2004, pp. v–vii.

47 See, for example, Chun Han Wong and Olivia Geng: Book Ban Rumors Boost Authors in China. *The Wall Street Journal*, 13 October 2014. http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2014/10/13/rumors-of-book-ban-boosts-authors-in-china/ (27 June 2016).

48 Zhao Chenxi, From Punk to Environmentalist.

49 Cf. Hannah Beech: The New Radical. *Time* (Asia), 2 February 2004, pp. 32–38.

50 See Chun Shu 春樹: 'Xiu dui guren si guguo' 休對故人思故國. In: Chun Shu 春樹: *Zai diqiu shang: Chun Shu lüxing biji* 在地球上：春樹旅行筆記. Beijing: Tongxin chubanshe, 2013, pp. 55, 63–65, 71, 74–75.

Chun Shu is also active on her Sina blog and Weibo 微博 microblog[51], where she has acquired a substantial fan base.[52]

The Quest for Cosmopolitanism

This section reviews the current state of research on the quest for cosmopolitanism in China. The discourse of cosmopolitanism has figured as a topic of international scholarly discussion since the 1990s as a result of the end of the Cold War (*circa* 1945–1991), which seemed to promise peace[53], as well as a global economic structure founded on new information and communication technologies. This discourse addresses interrelated social, political and cultural issues in the globalising world by promoting a vision that transcends identification with communities such as the nation-state, race, and the notion of culture. Embracing the idea of the world citizen, the concept provides the illusion of a global horizon for political obligations and rights, cultural creation and communication, social relations, and everyday life.[54] Notions such as Buddhist cosmopolitanism, Muslim cosmopolitanism[55], colonial cosmopolitanism[56], and socialist cosmopolitanism[57] have become the topics of recent research in a wide range of interdisciplinary areas.

Mayfair Yang's study of mass media in early 1990s Shanghai sheds light on the pursuit of cosmopolitanism in the People's Republic of China at a transitional period as Chinese consumers of media products disengage their individual subjectivity from the national subject prescribed by the socialist state. They imagine a transnational subjectivity through the experience of mass media, ranging from the popular music of capitalist Greater China, i.e.

51 Sina blog. http://blog.sina.com.cn/springtree; Chun Shu: Sina Weibo microblog. http://weibo.com/springtree.

52 As of 16 August 2016, Chun Shu's Sina Weibo account shows that she has attracted around 283,414 fans; her blog has received 4,616,259 hits.

53 Craig Calhoun: The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travellers. In: Steven Vertovec, Robin Cohen (eds): *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context and Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002, p. 87.

54 For the six major perspectives on cosmopolitanism as a social-cultural condition, as a world-view, as a political project of building transnational institutions and of legitimizing plural identifications, as everyday practice, and as intercultural competence, see Steven Vertovec/Robin Cohen: Introduction: Conceiving Cosmopolitanism. In: Steven Vertovec, Robin Cohen (eds), *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism*, pp. 8–14.

55 See, for example, Maria Rovisco/Sebastian Kim (eds): *Cosmopolitanism, Religion and the Public Sphere*. London: Routledge 2014. Derryl N. MacLean/Sikeena Karmali Ahmed (eds): *Cosmopolitanisms in Muslim Contexts: Perspectives from the Past.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2012; Seema Alavi: *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2015.

56 See, for example, Peter van der Veer: Colonial cosmopolitanism. In: Vertovec and Cohen (eds), *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism*, p. 165–79; Julia Kuehn: Colonial cosmopolitanism: Albert Smith and Rudyard Kipling in Victorian Hong Kong. *Studies in Travel Writing* 19:3 (2015), pp. 224–43. On colonial cosmopolitanism, see Leo Ou-fan Lee: *Shanghai Modern*; Meng Yue: *Shanghai and the Edges of Empires*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press 2006.

57 See Nicolai Volland: Translating the Socialist State: Cultural Exchange, National Identity, and the Socialist World of the Early PRC. *Twentieth-Century China* 33:2 (2008), pp. 51–72.

Taiwan and Hong Kong, to TV series and documentaries that portrayed the lives of Chinese citizens in Western cities, in particular New York and Tokyo.[58] Prominent examples include the novel *Manhadun de Zhongguo nüren* 曼哈頓的中國女人 (Chinese women in Manhattan, 1992) by writer and businesswoman Zhou Li 周勵 (b. 1951); the TV series *Beijing ren zai Niuyue* 北京人在紐約 (A Native of Beijing in New York, 1993) adapted from the eponymous novel (1991) by male writer Cao Guilin 曹桂林 (b. 1947); and the TV series *Shanghai ren zai Dongjing* 上海人在東京 (Shanghainese in Tokyo, 1996) adapted from a novel with the same title (1992) by male author Fan Xiangda 樊祥達 (b. 1955). Mayfair Yang's study of these works highlights the significant role of the mass media in conveying knowledge of the outside world to Chinese audiences. Stories of real and fictional ordinary Chinese citizens inspire the audience to imagine new perspectives, confronting them with different languages, work ethics, definitions of success and social acknowledgement.

Sabina Knight offers a literary reading of cosmopolitanism in her analysis of Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby*.[59] Situating the book at the intersection of the global and local, she analyses the novel from the perspective of cultural citizenship that emphasises the 'rights to information, representation, knowledge and communication.'[60] To her, the novel appears to promote the power of countering transnational capitalism and 'a powerful state apparatus' while celebrating the infatuation with cultural capital, class privilege and internalised misogyny.[61] Knight employs the global/local paradigm to affirm *Shanghai Baby* as a 'plaidoyer' for 'cosmopolitan cultural citizenship' in resistance to transnational capitalism.[62]

China in the mid-1990s witnessed a consumer revolution, especially in Shanghai and Beijing, and the rise of nationalism in the era of economic and cultural globalisation.[63] These developments have sparked a surge of narratives that attempt to construct a new cosmopolitan Chinese identity. 'Shanghai nostalgia' appears as one related phenomenon in the

58 Mayfair Mei-hui Yang: Mass Media and Transnational Subjectivity in Shanghai: Notes on (Re)Cosmopolitanism in a Chinese Metropolis. In: Aihwa Ong, Donald M. Nonini (eds): *Ungrounded Empires: The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism*. New York and London: Routledge 1997, pp. 287–319.

59 Sabina Knight: Shanghai Cosmopolitan: Class, Gender and Cultural Citizenship in Weihui's *Shanghai Baby*. In: Jie Lu (ed.): *China's Literary and Cultural Scenes at the Turn of the 21st Century*. New York & London: Routledge 2008, pp. 43–57.

60 Knight, Shanghai Cosmopolitan, p. 45.

61 Knight, Shanghai Cosmopolitan, pp. 243–57.

62 Knight, Shanghai Cosmopolitan, p. 46; see also Hillenbrand, Murakami, pp. 715–47.

63 On China's consumer revolution, see Deborah Davis (ed.): *The Consumer Revolution in Urban China*. Berkeley: University of California Press 2000. On cultural nationalism in 1990s China, see Yingjie Guo: *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary China*. London & New York: Routledge 2003. Rui Kunze contends that cultural nationalism had already germinated in the early 1980s, for example in avant-garde poetry, as a form of resistance against the state nationalism dictated by the Party-state. See Rui Kunze: *Struggle and Symbiosis: The Canonization of the Poet Haizi and Cultural Discourses in Contemporary China*. Bochum and Freiburg: Projekt Verlag 2012, pp. 67–68.

literary discourse of the late 1990s as writers, scholars and editors set out to salvage textual and visual sources on colonial Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s. The writings of authors such as Wang Anyi 王安憶 (b. 1954) and Chen Danyan 陳丹燕 (b. 1958) provide examples of this nostalgia for colonial Shanghai, a trait that also reappears in Wei Hui's comparisons of the post-colonial cityscape in the reform era with the colonial city of the Republican era.[64] This nostalgia emphasises the city's past status as an international metropolis integrated into the global colonial system of economics, culture, and politics. It also searches for historical precedents to capitalism and builds a teleology of capitalism in Chinese modernity that overwrites the official grand narrative of socialism and revolution. As Zhang Xudong has noted,

> [N]ostalgia can be considered as a sentimental Chinese response to a global ideology, whose singularity lies precisely in its homesick longing for a futurological utopia hinged on some earlier or more classical phase of world capitalism, on something Shanghai once was or at least could have been.[65]

Cosmopolitanism implies the aspiration of transcending the local and communal in the era of globalisation. Lisa Rofel's critical delineation of cosmopolitanism in China spells out a consciousness of hierarchical centre-periphery relations in the Chinese imagination of 'home' and 'world' in terms of both power and knowledge.[66] The construction of cosmopolitan identity appears to build on the possession of such knowledge and the contention for the ability to embody it.[67] Rofel portrays postsocialist cosmopolitanism as follows:

> This cosmopolitanism consists in two aspects in tension with one another: a self-conscious transcendence of locality, accomplished through the formation of a consumer identity; and a domestication of cosmopolitanism by way of nationalist-inspired renegotiation of China's place in the world.[68]

Song and Lee's study of masculinity in men's lifestyle magazines in China confirms Rofel's observation. It identifies in such magazines a discourse on elitism arising from consumer desires and behaviour patterns modelled on their Western counterparts and also a nationalism based on the construction of collective memory and an essentialist idea of Chineseness—in particular in terms of food, body, sex and health regimen.[69] In other words, the discourse on

64 Cf. Zhang Xudong: Shanghai Nostalgia: Postrevolutionary Allegories in Wang Anyi's Literary Production in the 1990s. *positions: east asia cultures critique* 8:2 (2000), pp. 349–87.

65 Zhang Xudong, Shanghai Nostalgia, p. 355.

66 Lisa Rofel: Between Tianxia and Postsocialism: Contemporary Chinese Cosmopolitanism. In: Gerard Delanty (ed.): *Routledge International Handbook of Cosmopolitanism Studies*, pp. 443–51.

67 Cf. Zhan Mei: Does It Take a Miracle? Negotiating Knowledge, Identities, and Communities of Traditional Chinese Medicine. *Cultural Anthropology* 16:4 (2001), pp. 453–80; Lisa Rofel: *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Public Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2007, p. 112.

68 Rofel, Between Tianxia, p. 448; see also Rofel, *Desiring China*, p. 111.

69 Song Geng/Tracy K. Lee: 'New Man' and 'New Lad' with Chinese Characteristics? Cosmopolitanism, Cultural Hybridity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines in China. *Asian Studies Review* 36:3 (2012), pp. 345–67.

cosmopolitanism locates the global world within China's local culture, constructing a new glocal version of culture.

Two Novels on Women Travellers

In their first bestselling novels *Shanghai Baby* and *Beijing Doll*, Wei Hui and Chun Shu extend the discourse of *Sex and the City* from the original site of action in New York to China's mega-cities, creating an indigenous version of a Chinese woman writer's vision of the glocalising city. Their two latter novels *Marrying Buddha* and *Light Years* bring the action back onto the global circuit, setting the stage in New York with excursions to Shanghai and Beijing. The two new novels retain from the earlier bestselling novels the use of semi-autobiographical Chinese narrators functioning as the main female protagonists. The following sections explore how the new novels add more multi-cultural and mixed-race hybrid characters, enhancing the cosmopolitan aspects of the narratives.

Cosmopolitanism in Marrying Buddha

The Chinese title of the novel *Marrying Buddha*, *Wode Chan*, literarily 'My Zen', points to Zen Buddhism or Zenism as the theme of the novel. It suggests the classic literary theme of pursuing the knowledge of the world and that of the self, in which the heroine's physical travels parallel her inner journey to self-discovery. The narrative addresses both domestic and Western readers by appealing to the popular interest in Buddhism within China and abroad and by exploiting the exotic image of Zenism in Western culture.[70] The narrative explicitly revolves around the theme of *Sex and the City*, citing Candace Bushnell's 1997 book twice in the opening quotations of Chapters 2 and 3, as well as repeatedly referring to the TV series within the main narrative.[71] *Marrying Buddha* thus reveals itself as a literary response to *Sex and the City* written from the Chinese perspective. It parades as a Chinese-Western hybrid version of the US narrative, mixing Chinese and Western elements, as can be seen in the choice of protagonists, the frequent use of dual opening quotations at the beginning of a chapter from Chinese and Western sources, and references to religions, foods, and literature from China, India, Europe and the US.

CoCo, the main protagonist of *Shanghai Baby*, returns in Wei Hui's sequel *Marrying Buddha* as the first-person narrator to continue her quest for emotional and sexual adventure in New York. She finds two male lovers in the city, first Muju, a hybrid character of mixed

70 See, for example, Lu-Hai Liang: China's stressed-out 'millenials' embrace Buddhism. *CNN*, 24 June 2015. http://edition.cnn.com/2015/03/29/asia/china-buddhism-millenials/ (27 July 2016). For Buddhism, in particular Zenism, in popular culture in and outside China, see Sharon A. Suh: *Silver Screen Buddha. Buddhism in Asian and Western Film*. London: Bloomsbury Academic 2015.

71 Wei Hui 衛慧: *Wode Chan* 我的禪. Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe 2004, pp. 9, 15, 25. Candace Bushnell: *Sex and the City*. London: Abacus, 1997.

Japanese and Italian origin, and then Nick, a Caucasian character.[72] CoCo's conversion to Zenism in New York through her encounter with Muju capitalises on the popular imagination of the city as a melting pot. Eastern religion appears as a globalising fashion. Nick who pursues CoCo as if in 'a Hollywood movie'[73] seems to embody cosmopolitan qualities of an earlier era, such as transnational mobility and chivalrousness underpinned by wealth and family prestige. Muju, on the other hand, personifies cosmopolitanism in the form of cultural hybridity. He is an independent documentary producer, travel book writer and teacher of Daoist meditation and Indian Yoga at a community college.[74] His political outlook is left-leaning, and he sympathises with Fidel Castro's Cuba as a brave country resisting American imperialism.[75] Muju's mixed race background, choice of profession and political views mark him as a new type of cosmopolitan citizen.

CoCo claims that she comes to understand Eastern culture only through her encounter with Muju. Chinese indigenous culture appears to gain relevance in the modern age only through confrontation with the New York melting-pot brand of US culture as 'the Other'. Contrasts and opposites appear to heighten CoCo's interest in native Chinese thought and practices. Muju's knowledge of the East seem to evoke the cultural discourses of hybridity and diversity which carry a spirit of tolerance and inclusiveness. In her study of Eurasian hybridity and Chinese visions of utopia Emma Teng has analyzed the construction of such forms of hybridity.[76] Her historical investigation into the Chinese discourse on mixed-race persons in late Qing and early Republican China shows that Eurasian hybridity appears as a eugenic tool to create the ideal racial breed of the future. It contributes to a new Chineseness constructed not simply in opposition to the West but also on the premise of a racial proximity between Chinese and Caucasians, as opposed to other races. This concept resonates in contemporary transnational media in Greater China that portray the Eurasian as 'an embodiment par excellence of the East-West cultural hybridity of modern Chinese society.'[77] This idea of Eurasian hybridity confirms rather than questions the racist discourse of white supremacy. In *Marrying Buddha*, the character Muju represents an Easternness that paradoxically belongs to the new global culture in a Western metropolis. It appears attractive to CoCo for two reasons: first, his Eurasian background gives her the illusion of racial proximity to her; and second, his practice of Eastern religions offers a lifestyle that she perceives as fashionable and that the mass media proclaim as positively alternative. As a result of learning Daoist meditation techniques and Chinese *taiji* 太極 martial arts exercises from Muju, CoCo quits drinking, smoking and drugs, choosing a healthier lifestyle.

72 Wei Hui, *Wode Chan*, p. 130.
73 Wei Hui, *Wode Chan*, p. 179.
74 Wei Hui, *Wode Chan,* p. 22.
75 Wei Hui, *Wode Chan,* p. 40.
76 Emma Teng: Eurasian Hybridity in Chinese Utopian Visions: From 'One World' to 'A Society Based on Beauty' and Beyond. *positions: east asia cultures critique* 14:1 (2006), pp. 131–63.
77 Teng, Eurasian Hybridity, p. 155.

In *Marrying Buddha*, Muju's cosmopolitanism derives from first, his genetic make-up, and second, his knowledge about the world and his understanding and practice of 'Eastern religions' (*dongfang zongjiao* 東方宗教).[78] His perceived cosmopolitan lifestyle provides CoCo with sexual fulfilment and psychological support. The 'Eastern religions' enumerated in the book include Daoism, Yoga, and Japanese Zen, all of which Muju appears to understand and practise. These qualities account for CoCo's physical attraction to him. The vagueness of the references to the so-called 'Eastern religions' suggests that the characters do not differentiate between the different religious traditions and use them mainly as signs of their non-Western culture and knowledge. Such signs provide the illusion of a cosmopolitanism built on non-Western knowledge. Their function thus resembles that of the plethora of quotations from Chinese and Indian religious, philosophical and literary writings ranging from Kongzi 孔子 (Confucius, 551–479 BCE) and the ancient Daoist philosopher Laozi 老子 (6th century BCE), to the Tang 唐 dynasty (618–907) poet Wang Wei 王維 (699–759), the Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) and the *Kama Sutra* at the beginning of each chapter.[79] Mirroring the melting pot of New York, the narrative brims with literary references to European, American, Chinese and Indian writings.

Chapter Seven of *Marrying Buddha* entitled 'Sex and Zen in the Kitchen' presents a pastiche of popular American and Japanese fiction, mixing allusions to *Sex and the City* and the Japanese bestselling novel *Kichin* キッチン (Kitchen, 1988) by Yoshimoto Banana 吉本ばなな (b.1964). A tale of sexual and social border-crossings, Yoshimoto's novel—also a bestseller in China—sets the action in a kitchen in Tokyo, describing the first-person female narrator's experiences with her transvestite mother. *Marrying Buddha* describes CoCo and Muju's enjoyment of physical pleasure in terms of both sex and food mixed with the practice of Buddhism. Muju's spacious kitchen with 'absurdly modern cooking facilities' acquires a spiritual aura when CoCo finds books there with titles such as *Zen and the Art of the Kitchen*.[80] The ensuing sex scene in the kitchen employs the vocabulary of Daoist sexual practices as CoCo describes herself as symbolising the ancient female principle of *yin* 陰 and Muju the masculine principle of *yang* 陽. Muju practises Daoist sexual techniques to prolong life and maintain his youth. The concept of Easternness thus appears exoticised, eroticised and ironically embodied in the hybrid character of Muju, who is more at home in the West than in the East.

CoCo herself, as is already known from her previous appearance as the protagonist in *Shanghai Baby*, symbolises a mixture of Eastern and Western images. Her name, spelt with two capital Cs, refers to the fashion icon Coco Chanel (1883–1971) and puns on the French perfume Coco, one of the exotic Western luxury products that fuel Chinese consumerism.[81] In

78 Wei Hui, *Wode Chan*, pp. 27–29.
79 Wei Hui, *Wode Chan*, pp. 43–51.
80 Wei Hui, *Wode Chan*, p. 46; Wei Hui: *Marrying Buddha*. London: Robinson 2005, p. 47.
81 Berg, Consuming Secrets, p. 321.

Shanghai Baby, CoCo's German lover Mark is associated with the luxury perfume CK (Calvin Klein).[82] The resulting love story of two protagonists symbolizing designer brands appears as a travesty of the Madame Butterfly story and a comedy of consumption and commercialisation.

In *Marrying Buddha*, CoCo as a transcultural woman traveller embodies a new type of Chinese woman who turns the tables on the cliché and popular fantasy of the submissive, exotic Oriental female. Although this is not explicit, the protagonist's name CoCo can also be read as a pun on Cho-Cho-san from the nineteenth-century Madame Butterfly story, made famous by Puccini's opera.[83] In *Shanghai Baby*, the story of CoCo, the girl who is eventually abandoned by her foreign lover Mark, exploits an Orientalist plot by playing with allusions to the Madame Butterfly theme. But the novel rewrites the Madame Butterfly trope with a modernist twist: it is the betrayed boyfriend —rather than CoCo— who commits suicide in the end, while CoCo emerges as a tough businesswoman who knows how to market her story. *Shanghai Baby* takes revenge on Orientalism by cashing in on it: it dishes up *his* story as *her* fantasy, exploits a traditional theme as a bestselling formula, and turns a Western-authored plot into a Chinese-authored popular novel that celebrates all the ingredients of consumer culture in the quest to produce a bestseller.

In *Marrying Buddha*, CoCo lives out her own version of *Sex and the City* in New York, revealing herself as a hybrid multi-cultural character. CoCo inverts gender stereotypes of both Eastern and Western origin: she—rather than her Western or Eastern lovers—is the traveller, the mistress of her adventures and her stories, a new female 'master' of her destiny, and a multi-cultural border-crossing literary character who only makes sense when read against both the European and Eastern literary traditions. The narrator mixes elements from Western and Eastern popular cultures in the description of CoCo:

> It's strange that an impetuous Chinese girl, who has been called 'a slave of Western culture' in China for knowing about the Beatles, the Sex Pistols, Marilyn Monroe, Allen Ginsberg, Charles Bukowski and Existentialism, should find herself in New York—that cruel bastion of capitalism—and having found love, hope and light there, should also learn about the arts of Chinese wisdom from a Japanese man. I had to learn to let those ancient wandering spirits, exiled from their native country, return to me, let them seep into my bloodstream and into my soul, like night birds looking for their roosting place.[84]

CoCo's stay in New York takes place during and after 9/11, making her an eyewitness to the fall of the Twin Towers.[85] Explicitly referring to 9/11 and war in the Middle East, CoCo

82 Wei Hui, *Shanghai baobei*, pp. 36–37.

83 The story 'Madam Butterfly' (1898) by John Luther Long was based on the travelogue *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887) by the French naval officer Pierre Loti (pseudonym of Julien Viaud, 1850–1923). The story of his affair with the Japanese lady Kikou-san made Loti the representative of nineteenth-century French literary exoticism; cf. Heiner Frühauf: Das Fremde im Eigenen, das Eigene im Fremden: Exotische Ästhetik am Beispiel Paris/Shanghai. *minima sinica* 1 (1989), pp. 1–38.

84 Wei Hui, *Marrying Buddha*, p. 70.

85 Wei Hui, *Wode Chan*, p. 24.

questions the experience of New York as a valid way to know the world and the self.[86] Instead, she seeks inner peace in nature, 'thousands of years of Chinese wisdom'[87], and Muju. In her SoHo apartment, she dreams of herself as a Tang Dynasty woman, referring to an era perceived to be a cosmopolitan period in Chinese history.[88] This dream invokes nostalgia in CoCo, 'a mysterious call, a yearning'.[89] When she is separated from her native land by the Pacific, she feels that 'the word China has never appeared so tangible and desirable.'[90] Implicitly the scene is imbued with the spirit of Chinese nationalism.

In sum, the narrative voice appropriates the cultural discourse of hybridity and diversity to construct a cosmopolitan aspect to CoCo's life in New York which is tinged with nostalgia for China. CoCo ultimately leaves both her New York lovers and finds her spiritual home on the Buddhist Putuo 普陀 Island near Shanghai. The search for cosmopolitanism turns CoCo back to her native local culture and the construction of a glocal idyll as the ideal place, a utopian safe haven where the experience of the global merges with familiar local culture.

Light Years

New York also attracts the semi-autobiographical female protagonist and first-person narrator called Yu Duan 遇斷 (literally, 'encounter and break up') in Chun Shu's novel *Light Years*.[91] Yu Duan expects to find her '*muse* and *fans*' (original in English) in the iconic American city.[92] A self-proclaimed punk similar to the main protagonist of *Beijing Doll*, she travels to New York on a language student visa to experience the American Dream.

After a forty-two day wait for her visa, she is able to fly to New York. She claims that her faith in the US crumbles while she is waiting, 'just like the two towers collapsed on 9/11.'[93] Meanwhile she resorts to imagining her stay in New York. In a poem she makes a must-do list which contains tourist activities such as going to the top of the Empire State Building, jogging in Central Park, visiting museums, going to the movies and shopping. Only the last item on the list—attending a concert by the punk band Anti-Flag—marks her self-image as a punk and rock music aficionado. The contrast between Yu Duan's predilection for Anti-Flag and her exploration of New York creates irony. As its name suggests, the band is known for their

86 Wei Hui, *Wode Chan*, p. 73.
87 Wei Hui, *Wode Chan*, p. 73.
88 Wei Hui, *Wode Chan*, p. 73. On the cosmopolitan nature of the Tang dynasty, see Mark Edward Lewis: *China's Cosmopolitan Empire. The Tang Dynasty*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2009.
89 Wei Hui, *Wode Chan*, p. 73. This paragraph is omitted in the English version, Wei Hui, *Marrying Buddha*, p. 70.
90 Wei Hui, *Wode Chan*, p. 73.
91 Chun Shu: *Guangnian zhi meiguomeng*光年之美國夢. Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe 2010, p. 128. This name also appears in Chun Shu's novel *2 tiao ming* 2條命 (Two lives, 2005), featuring two female characters with the names of Yu Duan and Nan Nan 楠楠; the latter is the same as one of the characters used in Chun Shu's original given name Zou Nan.
92 Chun Shu, *Guangnian zhi meiguomeng*, p. 214.
93 Chun Shu, *Guangnian zhi meiguomeng*, p. 251.

music opposing American patriotism and nationalism. Yu Duan however demonstrates her Chinese nationalism in New York when she arrives in the city with stickers of the Chinese national flag on her suitcase[94]; when she is angry when she sees the Tibetan Snow Lion Flag in the street; and when she flies into a rage and waylays a Taiwanese classmate after the latter implies that Taiwan is an independent state.[95] The music of Anti-Flag does not trigger any reflection on her part, but paradoxically reinforces her expressions of Chinese patriotism.

The references to rock music in *Light Years* symbolise transcultural trends that form part of China's new glocal culture similar to the allusions to *Sex and the City* in *Marrying Buddha*. Yu Duan uses her knowledge of Western popular culture such as rock music as a form of global cultural capital, asserting her cosmopolitanism. In New York Yu Duan discovers the ambivalent aspects of rock music as global cultural capital but also as part of an alien culture that both fascinates and shocks her.

One night, Yu Duan and her friend, a Chinese expatriate working in a New York rock club, go to the Chelsea Hotel with a young Spanish rock band. Although the narrative voice displays awareness of the hotel's fame for having accommodated many cultural legends, noting that 'every timeworn piece of wood [of the stairs] seemed to narrate the rise and fall of rock and roll and the history of American non-mainstream culture'[96], it does not share the enthusiasm the Spanish boys display for New York.

> 'How do you like New York?', he asked me.
>
> 'It's OK', I said. Since I came to the City, I had become part of the lower social class—no money, no fame and no identity.
>
> 'Come on, let me show you the true New York.' He dragged me to one side of the roof, 'How about this?'
>
> I flinched. Splendid, glorious, capitalist New York was within my reach. But I felt indifferent.[97]

In the hotel room, Yu Duan cannot bring herself to join in the group sex but tries to have a conversation about literature with a man wearing Fred Perry clothes. She tells the reader that the members of the rock band are twenty-one years old, 'the best age to come to New York.'[98] They can enjoy the 'American-style freedom (*Meishi ziyou* 美式自由): Do whatever you want', but she does not desire such freedom any more.[99] This critical attitude towards 'American-style freedom' also applies to the city: in the words of her Chinese-American friend Victor, New York is 'a city where anything may happen' and such 'freedom is a double-edged sword and it's easy to hurt yourself with it.'[100] Anonymity, poverty and low social status, attributes

94 Chun Shu, *Guangnian zhi meiguomeng*, p. 135.
95 Chun Shu, *Guangnian zhi meiguomeng*, pp. 140–43.
96 Chun Shu, *Guangnian zhi meiguomeng,* p. 162.
97 Chun Shu, *Guangnian zhi meiguomeng,* p. 162.
98 Chun Shu, *Guangnian zhi meiguomeng,* p. 164.
99 Chun Shu, *Guangnian zhi meiguomeng,* p. 164.
100 Chun Shu, *Guangnian zhi meiguomeng,* p. 153.

often related to subculture scenes, have become Yu Duan's main concerns. When she and another girl leave the hotel in the early morning, the narrative voice notes: 'Beijing seemed a light-year away.'[101] New York's rock scene appears in a negative light, linked to perceived excess, chaos and deviance.

Disappointed by her experience with this scene, Yu Duan finds a boyfriend called Patrick who lives a 'normal' life in the city and whose taste in film, music, and literature appear international. Moving in with Patrick in his parents' house on Staten Island, the self-proclaimed punk girl refuses to go to rock clubs again. With Patrick, the narrator has a 'normal' schedule. They get up at 7:15, have breakfast made by Patrick, go to school or work together, have lunch together and then come back to Staten Island together in the evening.[102] They enjoy a safe version of New York's cosmopolitan culture by visiting famous museums, buying groceries at organic food stores, and dining in restaurants which specialise in various culinary traditions.[103]

Yu Duan criticises New York's capitalism, noting that 'this metropolis is filled with fashion and lacks revolutionary passion'.[104] Such sentiments however give way to an enjoyable shopping experience: 'It was really a pleasure to shop in New York. As long as you have money, you can buy whatever you want and whatever you can imagine.'[105] What Yu Duan enjoys on Staten Island is exactly the opposite of the rock scene: an American middle-class lifestyle and a bourgeois morality underpinning the status quo, social order and consumer culture.

The relationship with Patrick breaks up when Yu Duan returns to Beijing because she finds New York more alienating than fulfilling. Patrick prefers to stay in New York because he needs his job in order to buy a house of his own. As in *Marrying Buddha*, the quest for cosmopolitanism ultimately leads Yu Duan back to the familiar pastures of her own local culture. Returning home with her experiences of global culture, she is able to construct a new glocal culture in China through her writings.

Sex and the Glocalising City: How Trends Travel across Media and Cultures

This section examines *Sex and the City* as a literary antecedent to Wei Hui's and Chun Shu's narratives to see how cultural flows can be traced as they travel across different genres, media and cultures and into Chinese popular discourse. This enables us to sketch the wider cultural context to the time when Wei Hui and Chun Shu were composing the novels under discussion.

Within its native US market *Sex and the City* had already travelled across different genres and media. It first appeared in *Hamptons Magazine* as a literary column entitled 'The Human

101 Chun Shu, *Guangnian zhi meiguomeng*, p. 164.
102 Chun Shu, *Guangnian zhi meiguomeng*, pp. 170–71.
103 Chun Shu, *Guangnian zhi meiguomeng*, pp. 180–84.
104 Chun Shu, *Guangnian zhi meiguomeng*, p. 129.
105 Chun Shu, *Guangnian zhi meiguomeng*, p. 181.

Cartoon' penned by Candace Bushnell (b. 1958), a free-lance writer from Glastonbury, Connecticut. The column served as a precursor to her later *Sex and the City* narratives.[106] From 1994 to 1996 she wrote a column on her dating experiences in New York entitled *Sex and the City* for the *New York Observer*. In its second incarnation the author collated the column to be published as a book entitled *Sex and the City* (1997). In its third incarnation the narrative transformed into a television series produced by the US company HBO which aired from 1998 to 2004. In its fourth incarnation it reappeared as the Hollywood movie *Sex and the City* (2008) and was followed by its film sequel *Sex and the City 2* (2010).[107]

US television shows and Hollywood films have enjoyed popularity in China, even if they only circulate in the underground market. DVD pirate copies of the US television show *Sex and the City*, for example, have brought into postsocialist China's new cultural discourse the dual theme of women's sexual liberation and of New York as a symbol of ultramodernity, globalisation and glamour. New York epitomises the metropolis that functions as the stage for women experiencing sexual liberation and hypermodernity while enjoying the comforts of consumer culture. The writings of China's new women authors transpose these themes into China's rising world cities, in particular Shanghai and Beijing, while creating their own brand of new urban discourse combining transcultural trends with the Chinese quest for cosmopolitanism.

The literary impact of the publication history of *Sex and the City* on Chinese cultural discourse first became apparent when the ailing Guangzhou magazine *Guangzhou huabao* 廣州畫報 (Guangzhou pictorial) needed a strategy to combat falling circulation figures in 2003 and looked to Candace Bushnell for inspiration. The magazine commissioned staff writer Li Li to compose a column for Guangzhou city based on the model of Bushnell's column for New York. Writing under the pseudonym of Muzi Mei, Li Li delivered. In the summer of 2003 she composed a column based on her sex life in Guangzhou. When she began to publish her sex column as a blog, she became notorious for exposing online the names of her lovers and graphic details about her affairs.[108] By November 2003 her online writings had appeared as a traditional print-medium book, *Yiqingshu* 遺情書 (Ashes of love, 2003). That month, the authorities banned both her website and her book. Muzi Mei lost her job at *Guangzhou huabao*, but she achieved record popularity while her book circulated widely both in pirate copies and online on alternative websites. Her publisher, Twenty-first Century Publishing

106 See Candace Bushnell: Homepage. http://candacebushnell.com/bio.html (8 July 2016).

107 On *Sex and the City* in the US, see, for example, Marta Fernandez-Morales: Illness, Genre, and Gender in Contemporary Television Fiction: Representations of Female Cancer in *Sex and the City* and *Desperate Housewives*. *Women's Studies* 38:6 (2009), pp. 670-90; Aine F. Lorié: Forbidden Fruit or Conventional Apple Pie? A Look at *Sex and the City's* Reversal of the Female Gender. *Media, Culture & Society* 33:1 (2011), pp. 35–51.

108 On Muzi Mei, see Daria Berg, Consuming Secrets, pp. 323–32. On Muzi Mei and other women bloggers see also Kay Schaffer/Xianlin Song: *Women Writers in Postsocialist China*. Abingdon: Routledge 2014, pp. 96-100.

House in Nanchang, Jiangxi province, admitted being aware of the ban but would not say why the book was forbidden.[109] Muzi Mei thus promoted blogging in China as a new way of expression and a means to bypass the traditional channels of state censorship.[110]

The dual theme of the sexually liberated woman and China's new generation of urban citizens thus caught on in China's wider cultural discourse—both web-based and in traditional print media—and became bestseller material in China around the turn of the twenty-first century. Wei Hui and Chun Shu promote transcultural trends and create a new cosmopolitan discourse to produce fiction that caters for a new market hungry for travelogues and narratives about the experience of consumer culture, sexual liberation and a new cosmopolitan lifestyle. The following section examines the literary vogue of travel writing and the quest for cosmopolitanism in twenty-first century China.

Travel Writing and Cosmopolitanism in Postsocialist China

This section seeks to show how travelogues contribute to the construction of a new glocal urban culture that embodies elements of cosmopolitanism. Cultural production of travelogues has two dimensions: first, in the form of writing about the direct experience of travel and second, in the form of writing about an imagined experience of travel through time or space.[111] Cultural consumption of travelogues reflects the aspiration to participate in the travel experience through one's imagination and the vicarious experience of arm-chair travel. This section argues that both the act of travelling and the act of consuming travelogues appear to belong to a new literary vogue, i.e. the desire of cultural producers and consumers to imagine themselves as cosmopolitan citizens of the world, giving rise to a new quest for cosmopolitanism in Chinese cultural discourse. It consists of three subsections: first, a brief history of travel writing in the Chinese literary tradition; second, examples of contemporary male writers and editors of travel writings; and third, an outline of the new women-authored travel writings.

A Brief History of Travel Writing

This section provides a brief overview of the tradition of travel writing in China. Travelogues already existed in imperial Chinese literature and were met with great acclaim.[112] Women began to write and edit travelogues as early as the late Ming era (*circa* 1600–1644). The famous late Ming courtesan, poet and painter Wang Wei 王微 (*circa* 1600–1647), who hailed

109 Internet sexual diaries are banned. *China Daily*, 28 November 2003. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/en/doc/2003-11/28/content_285466.htm (18 January 2004).

110 Berg, Consuming Secrets, p. 324–25.

111 See also Clifford: *Routes*.

112 The late Ming era, for example, saw a boom in the production and consumption of travelogues. See Daria Berg: Courtesan Editor: Sexual Politics in Early Modern China. *T'oung Pao* 99:1:3 (2013), pp. 173–211; on the publishing industry that produced the vogue for travelogues, see Ōki Yasushi: *Chūgoku*

from Guangling 廣陵 in Jiangdu 江都 (modern-day Yangzhou 揚州), for example, edited an anthology of literati-authored prose travelogues.[113] Wang Wei was active in the Qinhuai 秦淮 pleasure quarters in Nanjing 南京 during the late 1610s. According to seventeenth-century observers, she edited (*zhuanji* 撰集) a collection entitled *Mingshan ji* 名山記 (Records of famous mountains), a monumental anthology of travelogues with several hundred chapters (*juan* 卷), and composed a preface for it.[114] The work appears to be no longer extant, except in an abridged version entitled *Mingshan ji xuan* 名山記選 (Selected records of famous mountains) and attributed to the editorship of Wang herself.[115] Modern historian Dorothy Ko conjectures that the *Mingshan ji* 'appeared to be a project of more commercial than literary value.'[116] Although the possibility remains that Wang Wei's name was merely attached to the anthology by profit-minded publishers because she ranked among the women writers whose fame would promise better sales, it demonstrates the existence of a travel literature boom and the perceived power of editorship. Chun Shu as both a literary editor and a travel writer thus steps into a long tradition in Chinese cultural discourse and into the footsteps of famous literary women.

Mao's China witnessed a revolutionary-inspired travel boom in the form of the movements of the Red Guards across China. Their experiences found their way into the travelogues of revolutionary narratives.[117] Commercial tourism was seen as unacceptable because it was associated with the bourgeoisie.[118] The early years of Deng Xiaoping's reforms welcomed incoming tourists as a means of earning foreign currency but neither supported nor promoted domestic travel.[119] This changed when the Asian financial crisis of 1997 and the Chinese government's need to increase consumer demand led to the official decision in 1998 to 'designate tourism as a new key growth area of the national economy'.[120] Urban consumers started a travel boom and tourism became a desirable lifestyle attribute.[121] In his study of mobility in contemporary China, Pál Nyíri has shown how this revolution in Chinese leisure culture entailed a travel

Minmatsu no media kakumei: shomin ga hon o yomu 中国明末のメディア革命 ——庶民が本を読む. Tokyo: Tōsui shobō 2009.

113 On Wang Wei (*zi* Xiuwei 修微, *hao* Caoyi daoren 草衣道人, also known as Wang Mei 王嫵, Wang Guan 王冠), see Daria Berg: Courtesan Editor, pp. 180–83; Kang-i Sun Chang/ Haun Saussy (eds): *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press 1999, pp. 320–29.

114 Berg, Courtesan Editor, p. 183.

115 Dorothy Ko: *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press 1994, pp. 286–87.

116 Ko, *Teachers*, p. 286.

117 See e.g. Liu Po-cheng, et al.: *Recalling the Long March*. Beijing: Waiwen chubanshe 1978.

118 Cf. Pál Nyíri: *Mobility and Cultural Authority in Contemporary China*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press 2010, p. 61.

119 Nyíri, *Mobility*, p. 61.

120 Nyíri, *Mobility*, p. 61.

121 Nyíri, *Mobility*, p. 62.

literature publishing boom, including travelogues and guide books.[122] In the current era of globalisation travelogues feature global transcultural encounters and exchanges. Travelogues narrating both local and global travel experiences have flooded the market in twenty-first century China.[123] They include fictional narratives, essay collections, magazine articles and travel guides in print and online.[124]

Male Writers and Editors of Travel Literature

Male writers were the first in contemporary China to make successful professional careers through travel writing. Zhang Jinpeng 张金鹏 (b. 1978), for example, writing under the pen name Xiao Peng 小鹏, narrates his journey to Europe in his book *Wo ba Ouzhou saijin beibao* 我把歐洲塞進背包 (Backpacking in Europe, 2004). He graduated from Nankai University in Tianjin and went to the Netherlands to study for an MBA degree. From 2001 on, he started to travel around the world. His book *Beibao shinian: wo de zhiye shi lüxing* 背包十年:我的職業是旅行 (Ten years of backpacking: travelling is my profession, 2010) depicts his European adventures, in particular in the Netherlands, between 2001 and 2010. At home, this has earned him the label of 'China's first career traveller'.[125] His book is a travel guide geared for a native Chinese readership who may aspire to international travel but might not be able to afford it, and thus seek to savour the experience of travelling through the act of reading. The book also exists as a blog on Sina.com and has attracted around 31 million hits.[126]

Another male writer, Miao Wei 苗炜 (b. 1968), a graduate of Beijing Normal University, published a collection of his travel columns entitled *Rang wo qu na huahuashijie* 讓我去那花花世界 (Touring this mortal coil, 2008).[127] Miao Wei was the editor-in-chief of the influential cultural magazine *Sanlian Life Weekly*, and is regarded as a star journalist.[128] He recently abandoned arts and culture journalism to work for the Chinese version of the business publication *Bloomberg Businessweek*.[129] This shows how key cultural producers and professional media workers in China today have joined and led the trendy phenomenon of travel writing.

Travelogues in textual and visual forms—as essays and photographs—also feature prominently in the bestselling youth-oriented literary magazine *Zui xiaoshuo* 最小說 (Zui Novel),

122 Nyíri, *Mobility*, pp. 61–76.

123 Nyíri, *Mobility*, p. 61.

124 Nyíri, *Mobility*, p. 74.

125 See Leng Shanshan: Beibaoke Xiao Peng: chenzhe nianqing qu lüxing. *Wangyi xinwen*, January 2 2011. http://news.163.com/11/0102/11/6PCVSUCN00014AED.html (18 July 2016).

126 See Zhang Jinpeng's Sina blog Beibaoke Xiao Peng 背包客小鹏. http://blog.sina.com.cn/hepai (18 July 2016).

127 Title as translated by Paper Republic, see N. a.: Miao Wei. Paper Republic, no date. https://paper-republic.org/authors/miao-wei/ (25 June 2016).

128 Miao Wei, *Paper Republic*.

129 Editor/Writer Miao Wei Abandons Culture Magazine for Bloomberg. *Paper Republic*, no date. https://paper-republic.org/news/newsitems/46/ (25 June 2016).

a product of the publishing empire of literary superstar Guo Jingming 郭敬明 (b. 1983), one of China's foremost cultural entrepreneurs.[130] Guo Jingming is not alone in producing such magazines, as is shown by the success of literary magazine *Li* 鯉 (Newriting), edited by Zhang Yueran 張悦然 (b. 1983).[131] These magazines publish mainly writings on travels outside China, particularly in Europe, and typically mix text with matching photographs.

Women-Authored Travel Writings

Women-authored travel writings in postsocialist China appear in various genres in both the traditional print medium and as web-based discourses—as fiction, Weibo microblogs, and essay contributions to the new literary format of a 'mook' (*zazhishu* 雜誌書), a mixture between a magazine and a book, as the traditional magazine format is perceived as having only limited appeal.[132] The novels of Wei Hui and Chun Shu narrate life in the city as a stage for Chinese travellers and new hybrid characters that not only embody cultural glocalisation—merging global and local traits—but also literally have multi-cultural or mixed race characteristics. Chun Shu's 2013 collection of her travel diaries *Zai diqiu shang* exemplifies the new vogue of travel writings alongside articles by Xiao Peng, Miao Wei and in the magazine *Zui Novel*. Chun Shu takes the production of travel literature from the traditional print medium into the new web-based discourse. Her Weibo microblog functions as an online travelogue.[133] In 2015, for example, she posted on Weibo a day-to-day account of her sojourn in Berlin.[134] She currently has 284,027 followers and 7,843 entries on Weibo. Mian Mian similarly mentioned her trip to Moscow in 2015 in her online diary on Weibo for her audience of followers.[135] As of 8 July 2016, Mian Mian's Weibo microblog has 57,314 fans and 15,102 entries.[136]

One of China's most successful bestselling women writers, Li Jie 勵婕 (b. 1974), who achieved celebrity as a pioneering Internet writer under the pen name Anni Baobei 安妮寶貝 (Annie Baby)[137], has also recently joined the trend of non-fiction travel writing. Originally from Ningbo, Zhejiang province, she worked for a bank, an advertising company and the pioneering Chinese literary website Rongshu xia 榕樹下 (Under the Banyan Tree) in Shanghai. In 1997–98 she began publishing short stories on love and the consumerism of white-collar workers living in China's new mega-cities, focusing on their doomed search for

130 On Guo Jingming see Chapter 8.

131 On Zhang Yueran, see Zhang Yueran. *Paper Republic*, no date. https://paper-republic.org/authors/zhang-yueran/ (July 18 2016).

132 Zhang Xiaomo 張小摩/Song Shumei 宋淑美: Wenxue zazhi "Xiao geming" 文學雜誌"小革命". *Nandu zhoukan*, 19 April 2011. http://www.nbweekly.com/culture/books/201104/14261.aspx (27 July 2016).

133 Chun Shu: Weibo. http://www.weibo.com/springtree?is_hot=1 (8 July 2016).

134 Chun Shu: Weibo. weibo.com/springtree.

135 Mian Mian 棉棉: Mian Mian sushi 素食. weibo.com/writermian (24 July 2016).

136 Mian Mian: Weibo. http://www.weibo.com/writermian?is_hot=1 (8 July 2016).

137 For Daria Berg's interview with Anni Baobei, see Chapter 10.

happiness, their loneliness, spiritual and emotional impoverishment and feelings of alienation. She describes her main protagonists as travellers haunted by their desire to escape the consumerism of the 'south'—associated with the city of Shanghai—and to travel 'north' to the area around Beijing to find spiritual fulfilment.

From 2000 Rongshu xia hosted a regular column in which Li Jie's writings appeared 'for kindred spirits to read'.[138] That same year, she turned her back on web-based writing and published her first print-medium volume *Gaobie Wei'an* 告别薇安 (Goodbye, Vivian), a collection of earlier web-based short stories. Selling an estimated half a million copies, the book became the first of thirteen books published between 2000 and 2014 including novels, short stories and essay collections. Her blog reflects her popularity, with 30.3 million followers.

Over the last few years Li Jie turned towards non-fiction travel writing and editing. In 2011 she edited two issues of a new journal entitled *Dafang* 大方 with the English subtitle *O-pen.* This journal had the new format of a mook, but ceased publication after only two issues. Li Jie claims she is unaware of the reasons why the authorities withdrew the publishing licence.[139] The two issues of *Dafang* feature literary contributions by international authors including V.S. Naipaul and Murakami Haruki, and a few Chinese contemporary and older authors such as Yu Hua 余華 (b. 1960) and Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885–1967), as well as Li Jie's own travel writings and photography, notably from her journey to India.

In 2014 Li Jie announced via Weibo that she would adopt the Buddhist-inspired pen name Qingshan 慶山. That year saw the publication of her first book written under this new pseudonym, *Dewei zengyou* 得未曾有 (Unprecedented gains), a non-fiction travelogue containing four interviews with a young Tibetan Buddhist monk-poet and painter, an old woman who is a zither-player, a cook-cum-painter and a photographer who returned from the city to the countryside to live with his wife and children. Travel writing and reading travelogues are part of a new cultural vogue in China, catering to a new audience of aspiring middle-class citizens for whom travelling is a lifestyle dream and a status symbol. All the multi-generic and multimedia writings about travelling discussed above belong to a renaissance in travel writing that also forms part of the new quest for cosmopolitanism in contemporary Chinese discourse.

Chinese Students and Writers Abroad

In a wider sense the descriptions of transcultural travellers in the novels by Wei Hui and Chun Shu echo the journeys of the Chinese students in the Republican era (1911–1949) who travelled to Japan, Europe and the US to acquire foreign knowledge and return to China with the aim of making it stronger politically.[140] Examples of famous male students who became China's political leaders include Sun Yatsen 孫中山 (1866–1925) who received secondary

138 Michel Hockx: *Internet Literature in China*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press 2015, p. 39.

139 See Chapter 10.

140 Cf. Whitney Stewart: *Deng Xiaoping: Leader in a Changing China*. Minneapolis, MN: Twenty-First Century Books 2001.

schooling in Honolulu between 1878 and 1883, and Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平 (1904–1997) who studied in France and Moscow between 1919 and 1927. Famous male intellectuals who set out to study abroad include the writer Lu Xun 魯迅 (Zhou Shuren 周樹人, 1881–1936) who studied medicine in Japan[141]; his younger brother, the writer and translator Zhou Zuoren who followed Lu Xun to Japan in 1906 to study civil engineering and attended lectures on Ancient Greek and Chinese philology[142]; and the translator Fu Lei 傅雷(1908–1966) who studied in France.[143]

Pioneering Chinese women students abroad include the revolutionary Qiu Jin 秋瑾 (1875–1907) who studied in Japan from 1903 to 1906[144]; Sophie H. Chen (1890–1976), the first female student sent to the US by the Qing government, who in 1910 became Beijing University's first female professor, teaching the history of higher education[145]; Soong Ai-ling 宋藹齡 (Song Ailing, 1888–1973) and her sister Soong Chingling 宋慶齡 (Song Qingling, 1893–1981), the wife of Sun Yat-sen, who both studied at Wesleyan College; and their sister Soong Mei-ling 宋美齡 (Song Meiling, 1898–2003), the wife of Chiang Kai-shek, who studied at both Wesleyan and Wellesley Colleges between 1908 and 1917.[146] China's 'first female architect' and writer Lin Huiyin 林徽因 (1904–55) attended St. Mary's College in London in 1920 when her father Lin Changmin 林長民 (1876–1925) was sent to England as the director of China's League of Nations Institute. She also studied fine arts at the University of Pennsylvania and Yale University.[147] These women returned to China to leave their mark as writers, scholars, political activists, or specialists with foreign expertise.

Although Wei Hui and Chun Shu's protagonists are not students but writers, they continue the tradition of travelling abroad to acquire foreign knowledge and returning to China to transmit this knowledge, in this case by writing fictional narratives inspired by their travels and

141 On Lu Xun, see David E. Pollard: *The True Story of Lu Xun*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press 2002.

142 On Zhou Zuoren, see Susan Daruvala: *Zhou Zuoren and An Alternative Chinese Response to Modernity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center 2000. On Zhou Zuoren's intellectual activities in Japan, see Lu Yan: *Re-understanding Japan: Chinese Perspective*, 1895–1945. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press 2004.

143 On Fu Lei, see Angie Christine Chau: Dreams and Disillusionment in the City of Light: Chinese Writers and Artists Travel to Paris, 1920s-1940s. Dissertation (University of California, San Diego) 2012.

144 On Qiu Jin, see Kazuko Ono: *Chinese Women in a Century of Revolution, 1850-1950*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 1989, pp. 59-65.

145 Doris T. Chang: *Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Taiwan*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press 2009, p. 32.

146 Cf. Ya-chen Chen: *Women in Chinese Martial Arts Films of the New Millennium: Narrative Analyses and Gender Politics*. Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books 2012, p. 18.

147 On Lin Huiyin, see Wilma Fairbank: *Liang and Lin: Partners in Exploring China's Architectural Past*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1994; Elaine Dong: Lin Huiyin (1904–1955). In: Yuwu Song (ed.): *Biographical Dictionary of the People's Republic of China*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland 2013, pp. 199–201.

experience of global popular culture. These writings cater to the current consumer demand for travelogues and themes that bring global popular culture home to China, merging elements from global and local popular cultures.

Concluding Remarks

Both Wei Hui's and Chun Shu's semi-autobiographical protagonists in *Marrying Buddha* and *Light Years* embody women writers, transcultural travellers and cosmopolitan citizens who set out on a literary journey to negotiate changing gender roles, sexual liberation, economic empowerment, the new freedom to travel within and outside China, and the rise of women as China's new cultural entrepreneurs. The protagonists seek the experience of a cosmopolitan lifestyle abroad and find in New York a global stage for their literary and sexual aspirations. Elements of Western popular culture such as *Sex and the City* or rock music function as examples of glocalising transcultural flows into China's new literature. They appear as inspiration for the Chinese women writers—in their personae as fictional protagonists and also as implied novelists—in Wei Hui's and Chun Shu's novels. These Chinese women represent 'glamour' writers with global literary aspirations and the desire to turn their works into successful commodities.

The novels *Marrying Buddha* and *Light Years* both focus on the glocalising metropolis as the playground for young Chinese women caught up in China's economic and sexual revolutions. They portray their protagonists as belonging to a new generation of cosmopolitan citizens living in a world that appears as both globalising and localising—emulating foreign life styles and fashions perceived as global while at the same time emphasizing the Chineseness of their world. The interplay of global and local cultures—including pop culture, entertainment culture, film, fiction and opera—looms large on these writers' mental maps. Inspired by their imagination of New York as the archetypical cosmopolitan city, the women travellers in *Marrying Buddha* and *Light Years* set out to experience a global lifestyle and explore its cultural scenes. They seek to acquire knowledge about the urban space and culture of New York, and as writers, they imply that they can transmit the knowledge they have gained abroad.

Both Wei Hui and Chun Shu composed their novels about life in New York in the period after 9/11 and both refer to these events explicitly. Craig Calhoun sees the terrorist attack as a milestone that stimulated scholars and writers to reflect on their optimism about the globalisation of the 1990s.[148] All these elements contribute to the protagonists' ambivalent attitudes towards New York: they see their travels and time in the city as a means of gaining knowledge about the world, and finally make it their task to take it back home again. Upon their return to China the implied novelists construct an imaginary of a new glocalising culture in their writings about travel and cosmopolitan popular culture. The global setting appears

148 Calhoun, Class Consciousness, pp. 86–87.

to reflect back on the local setting by implication: while the narratives openly mention the cataclysmic events of 9/11 and their global aftermath, they remain silent on the events of June 4, 1989 and their consequences in China.

The fictional narratives by Wei Hui and Chun Shu about Chinese women travellers to New York contribute to a new discourse on glocalisation in China. This discourse forms part of larger trends in cultural production and consumption such as body writing and travel writing, reflecting new consumer demands, dreams, aspirations and nightmares. In responding to such trends, the novels of both Wei Hui and Chun Shu showcase a new generation of women cultural entrepreneurs in twenty-first century China.

V
Internet Literature and the Ebook Industry in Twenty-first Century China

10
'People Must Search within China's Contradictions to Discover What Really Matters': An Interview with Bestselling Author Anni Baobei

Daria Berg

Editors' note: Li Jie 励婕 (b. 1974), better known by her pen name Anni Baobei 安妮宝贝 (Annie Baby), is a novelist and essayist from Ningbo, Zhejiang province. In 1997–1998 she begun publishing short works of fiction on the pioneering Chinese literary website Rongshu xia 榕树下 (Under the Banyan Tree). Li Jie later joined the staff of the website and from 2000 the website Under the Banyan Tree hosted a regular column in which her writings appeared 'for kindred spirits to read.' In 2000 she also published her first volume in print, *Gaobie Wei'an* 告别薇安 (Goodbye, Vivian), a collection of short stories that included some of the works she had previously published online. The book went on to sell an estimated half a million copies and turned her into a household name among young Chinese readers. After publishing several successful novels under the name of Anni Baobei, among them *Lianhua* 莲花 (Lotus, 2006), the author announced via *Weibo* in 2014 that she would adopt the Buddhist-inspired pen name 'Qingshan 庆山'. Daria Berg interviewed Li Jie in her Beijing apartment on 1 September 2014.

Berg: The city is an essential element of your works. Could you elaborate on the relationship between urban life and your own life?

Li: My novels are mainly about urban life, with some exceptions. For example, *Lianhua* is about Tibet. In fact, many of my works concern travelling, including my own travels to various places, sometimes to cities abroad like Tokyo and Kyoto. I like Japan, so I try to visit it once or twice a year and stay for a week or two each time. I wrote about Tokyo and Kyoto in my last novel *Chun yan* 春宴 (Spring banquet, 2013), and my essays mention Japan quite often too. I rather enjoy travelling and my travel experiences constitute a major part of my stories. I focus much less on Shanghai now. I was living there during my early years as an author, but haven't written about it much since I moved to Beijing in 2001.

Berg: Your stories often feature wanderers who seem unable to stop drifting.

Li: I don't think they are actually wandering. It may be that they are looking for something. Maybe they are looking for answers, or for something that enables them to feel settled, a sanctuary for their soul. Most of the time that is what they are searching for. I think there a lot of drifters in Chinese society nowadays, and that's because many young people want to leave their hometowns to see the world,

and try to achieve the life they dream of. On a more practical level, their motives for this, the reason they do it, is that they are hoping for a more satisfactory life, in which for example they can make money, find a better job and get to enjoy the sophisticated social environment of a metropolis. On the spiritual level they are seeking to put their ideas into practice or, in other words, to find their mission in life.

Berg: Which perceptions of life in China do your stories convey? Do they express universal themes and values?

Li: My stories are predominantly portrayals of just a few characters, each of whom I try to approach as an individual. I don't really care about larger issues, such as society as a whole, because you are unable to truly capture these issues from an individualistic point of view. But if I explore the depth of a character's mind and offer a view on his/her life, I feel my stories become more convincing, which means they are honest manifestations of people's thoughts, their sufferings and their anxieties. Are there universal values in my stories? I think human nature is universal. So whenever I write about human nature, my stories express universal themes. By human nature or values what I mean is this—that we are all seeking for something in our lives and trying to bring it into being. The idea of searching for something is a universal one. Readers who know little about China may perhaps learn from my stories how confused young people living in big cities are. Their confusion stems from the imbalance between the material aspect—money, commodities—and the spiritual aspect of their lives. This condition may also have something to do with Westernisation. Right now China is putting great emphasis on economic development, and tradition is being gradually undermined. This is perhaps what makes people feel unsettled, because they no longer have a strong bond with their tradition. As they come under the influence of certain values, of a certain kind of society, they begin to feel confused about what a good life actually is. What I am trying to say is that, nowadays, young people ask themselves whether they need money to live a good life, or whether a good life actually means feeling calm and content in your heart and has nothing to do with getting rich. In the current social climate, due to rapid economic development, many people are led to believe that a good life means an affluent life, but in fact that isn't always the case. The drifters and wanderers in my books are looking for this kind of meaning in life, or maybe they symbolize the search for that meaning.

Berg: How do you convey your view of life through your characters and your stories?

Li: The characters in my stories often live an unsettled life, because they leave their hometowns and the places they are familiar with, and go far away. Their personal journeys include their physical travels. Sometimes they migrate somewhere else, sometimes they just travel to another place, perhaps one which is very remote or dangerous. Or they may go to a place where they feel at one with Nature, such as a

ravine, or a high mountain or a forest. Places where they can immerse themselves in Nature. My philosophy of life is that we cannot stop at the superficial level of life. We have to explore the deeper level, to broaden the scope of life, to find something worthwhile. But if you never leave, never go out into the world, in the end you'll probably find nothing. You'll still be floundering in misery, you'll still be struggling, unable to make that breakthrough.

Berg: How do you think China's huge first-tier cities, such as Shanghai, Beijing and Guang-zhou, compare with cities overseas?

Li: Big cities in China, like Shanghai or Beijing, are currently undergoing rapid economic growth, including massive building projects and the development of transport systems. In terms of their urban population these cities can be considered as metropolises. But I don't think these Chinese cities have reached a level which can be described as advanced. What I mean by this is that the growth of a city includes not only the economic aspect, but also how people live in these cities, whether they can feel a sense of belonging, and whether a certain order or stable arrangement in the life of the city has been established. These aspects are just as important. In some of the big cities in foreign countries that I have visited I have found not only advanced economic development, but also a prevailing atmosphere of calm, which I think is crucial. People living there are very composed; they are not flustered or anxious. There is no sense of chaos. This is the kind of city I think we can call a top-tier city. For example, I really like Kyoto as a city because of its calm atmosphere. Maybe it is because they have preserved its ancient appearance, its traditions, things which are ancient and not all modern and up-to-date. It is the stability of things like these that makes people feel secure. That is why the people living there are fine with the city as it is.

Berg: How do the drifters in your stories represent or symbolize the urban culture of contemporary China?

Li: As I said just now, what I think the current urban culture in China needs is a kind of breakthrough. Certainly everyone is getting wealthier, life is getting more comfortable, and the cities are getting more prosperous. Yes, there's no doubt that this is all going on right now. But more important than all of this are the things that reach into the depths of our being. I think my writings are intended to convey this idea, of how we can obtain the truest things in life, not just things which are superficial. As I see it, this is an inward journey, not an outward one. You must find this truth in your heart, not in these cities, not in the superficial and material aspects of life.

Berg: Why do you think stories about 'urban drifters' are popular with Chinese readers today?

Li: I think this is because many people lack courage, and that's why so few of them are willing to leave a place and embark on a journey. Traditionally, in China, parents hope their children will live safe, sheltered lives, lives where everything is in the

correct order, and this is why many people aren't brave enough to leave their hometown, their parents or their family, and go somewhere far away. But even if they can't do that themselves, I guess they like reading stories about the journeys of people who can. It may be that in these stories they can find something they really yearn for.

Berg: You began your career by publishing on the Internet. What are the main differences between the Internet and traditional print media?

Li: Initially, when I started out in 1997–1998, what I wrote was published online, but since 2000 my work has come out in traditional print media. When I first published my stories online it was because I didn't want to become a writer. It's tremendously difficult to become a professional writer in China — you need to publish frequently in journals and magazines and to have good connections. So I didn't think I would become a professional writer. I began writing with a very playful attitude, just having fun online, writing stories as if I was playing games. Then I realised that when these stories became available online, many people actually loved reading them, and that is why they were eventually published in print. Once my work had begun to be published as books, starting from 2000, I simply stopped posting stuff online. Everything changed then, because my print books found many readers, so I turned into a proper, professional writer. Print has become the main publishing avenue for me now. I don't see any difference between these two kinds of media. What matters to me most is that my writings are published and people can read them—this is my only goal. If I hadn't been able to publish my writings as books, I would have continued writing online and I would have maintained my playful attitude to it. My online literary career lasted only about two years, and afterwards I just stopped posting stories online and since then I have been publishing around a book a year, always with the same publishers.

Berg: Your Internet fiction features a highly innovative writing style and has been very well received. How has the Internet influenced the way the readers read, or the subject matter of what is written online?

Li: When I was still an Internet writer, I didn't see my success online as being due to a particularly innovative writing style. It's just that the way I express myself is quite unusual, and in those days no one was writing in that kind of simple, straightforward style. I tend to formulate my sentences very succinctly, very simply, and not in over-elaborate ways, so that my views are clearly expressed. A lot of writers in the past used to be quite wordy, and tended to write complicated or pointless sentences, but I have always voiced my ideas quite straightforwardly. I think that is why readers like my work. However, my writing style has not been influenced by the Internet. I simply started writing and wrote in my own way. I would not say I am eccentric. I am just used to doing things the way I want to. That means I prefer to do things in my own way, rather than thinking about what other people want me to do, or

what would please them. I don't think you can call this eccentric. I am just trying to stick to my own style. I am individualistic and persistent, rather than eccentric.

Berg: What new types of literary writing do you think will appear in the future in China? What effect are new technological tools, such as microblogging and mobile applications, having on Chinese literature?

Li: I think the central thing for literary creation, the core of it, is the views you express. The medium you choose is not that important—it doesn't matter whether you write with a pen, or you write online, or you publish your work in print. What is of the utmost importance is what you, as a writer, want to say and how you choose to express it. As for the latest tools, like microblogging and mobile apps, I think they may have a negative influence on readers, because they may get into the habit of reading too fast. Reading too fast is problematic. Sometimes a writer's works require you to read them quietly and carefully, not to rush through them at high speed. Reading in that way will only result in a superficial understanding of the work and this is a real problem.

Berg: How do you assess literary creation in China today?

Li: I just concentrate on trying to produce good work and rarely concern myself with other people's writings. I think that's their job and it has nothing to do with me. All I care about is how to convey my views, how to improve the way in which I express myself, how to achieve satisfaction for myself. That is all I need. What other authors have in mind, how and what they write—that's their concern, not mine.

Berg: Do you think your writing can be categorized as 'body writing' (*shenti xiezuo* 身体写作)?

Li: Yes, in my early works I did write about sex. They are stories about relationships between men and women. These people may be drifters, but love still plays an important part in their lives. When I wrote about sex, about the body, in these early works, I was only trying to convey the deep sense of loneliness my characters feel. It was not their physical desires that I was writing about. Some writers choose to write about sex as a way of showing off their audacity. But when I write about sex, I tend to link this theme to a deep sense of loneliness.

Berg: The characters in your stories do not appear to be interested in politics. Is it because you are not interested in politics either?

Li: I never write about politics in my novels. They are mainly about travelling, or emotional relationships between men and women. Later on, the emotional relationships were extended to include those between family members, between parents and children, between friends and between strangers. So these stories are about all kinds of affection and relationships, and about travelling. Those are the two major themes in my stories. My characters never express their views on politics, and neither do I. When you try to comment on or debate the overall social situation, most of the time your efforts are futile, whereas if you try to influence individuals, that

may be more useful. If we all strive to better ourselves as individuals, the whole of society will be better too. That is why my attention is concentrated on individuals, on individual people, rather than on society or the nation as a whole. If each of us can learn how to think, which means learning how to search for and find true peace and equilibrium, each of us will be able to become more respectful and responsible, and when this happens the whole of society will improve. That's how I see it.

Berg: You were the editor of the literary magazine *Da fang* 大方 (O-pen), but only two issues of it were ever published.

Li: Yes, only two issues came out and then it folded. I am not quite clear about the reasons for that. I was told that publication had to cease, but I'm not sure why that was. The focus of the two issues was not Chinese literature. Among others, we introduced V.S. Naipaul, some Japanese authors like Murakami Haruki (b. 1949), and a few Taiwanese and Hong Kong writers. Yu Hua 余华 (b. 1960) was the only [contemporary] Chinese writer we chose for the magazine, alongside earlier writers such as Zhou Zhuoren 周作人 (1885–1967) and so on. That's what was in those two issues. At the moment I'm not involved with any other periodicals as I've just published a new book. It contains interviews I did with four people, all of them Chinese—a woman zither player, a Tibetan monk, a cook and a photographer who returns to live in a rural area. It is not a work of fiction. Readers nowadays are also interested in non-fiction, and this recent book of mine has been so popular that it's become a bestseller. That's how I know that many readers, some of them young, find non-fiction fascinating. Readers are not only drawn to fictional works, they like real life stories too, and learning how people actually live. This is something they care about, and so do I. I hope I've been able to find ways of life that I can commend to my readers, so they can read about them, and get to understand something of other people's lives and other people's views on life. That's what I want to bring to my readers. I'm taking a break right now, because the book has just been published. Later on, I might write a novel or some essays. I'm thinking about the novel at the moment. It will have something to do with cities, and the topics we talked about earlier, but will also be about some philosophical or religious doctrines and principles, because in the past few years I've become more interested in philosophy and religion, so I'm planning to bring some of that into my novels. Mainly Indian philosophy, but also Tibetan. I am interested in the Zen teachings of ancient Japan and China, too—teachings relating to Buddhism.

Berg: Do you read works by other contemporary writers?

Li: When I was younger, in my teens or twenties, I read a great deal of literature, and as a student I read a lot of literary classics, mostly Chinese but also some Western ones, but during the past few years my reading habits have changed and now I rarely read any works of fiction. What I do read, as I said just now, is philosophy, including both ancient Indian and Chinese philosophy, and Buddhist teachings, especially

those of Tibetan Buddhism. I also read books on yoga and on psychology. Not long ago I read some books by Bert Hellinger, the German psychotherapist. I'm also interested in traditional Chinese culture, things like ancient musical instruments, handicrafts, painting, textiles and porcelain, as well as tea, the Chinese zither and so on. I haven't actually paid much attention to contemporary writers and their work for a while, and I hardly ever read novels now.

11
Postsocialist Publishing: Internet Literature in the PRC

Michel Hockx

Internet literature (*wangluo wenxue* 网络文学) has been immensely popular in mainland China ever since the founding of the first literary websites in the late 1990s. Initially there was some interest in using the new media to produce innovative and experimental forms of literature, but this was soon overtaken by an unprecedented boom in online genre fiction, ranging from popular romance and martial arts fiction to various forms of erotic writing, all with the genre indicator *xiaoshuo* 小说 ('fiction'). According to official statistics, accessing applications for reading and writing fiction has consistently been among the top ten reasons for Chinese people to go online. Although other forms of online writing continue to exist and the World Wide Web is a large enough space to accommodate plenty of niche activity, for many the term *wangluo wenxue* has already become synonymous with 'online fiction.'

Online genre fiction is successful in China because it has come up with a hugely successful business model, first pioneered by a website aptly named Qidian 起点 (Qidian zhongwen wang 起点中文网; Starting point),[1] which at some point around 2010 was among the top 500 most-visited websites in the world. The Qidian model is simple: on the one hand it operates as a standard online forum, offering users the opportunity to publish their writing online and receive comments from readers. At the same time, however, the site also contracts a number of more experienced authors, whose works appear in serialization, chapter by chapter, with some of the chapters accessible only to those who pay money to subscribe. Income from subscriptions is shared between the authors (70 per cent) and the site (30 per cent). The brilliance of the model lies not only in its attraction to readers, who are served with regular instalments of their favourite genre for a relatively modest amount of money, but especially in its attraction to aspiring authors. They are lured to the site with promises of a career trajectory: from submitting work to the normal forums, to establishing a readership, to being discovered by the site's editors, to becoming a contracted author, to making money. The site, and all others that have by now copied the model, also acts as intermediary for contacts with publishing houses willing to bring out some of the novels in book form.

In some way, sites like these can be seen as 'cultural translations' of business models known in the West from companies such as Harlequin (known as Mills & Boon in the UK and as Cora Verlag in Germany). Like those western companies, the Chinese fiction websites especially target female readers, with many of them featuring links to special sub-sites for women only. Yet whereas the likes of Mills & Boon only use their websites for selling books and for social

1 On Qidian, see also Chapters 12 and 13.

networking, the Chinese genre fiction websites thrive by selling access to work that must be read on screen, and is read that way by millions of readers. Moreover, sites like Qidian not only cater to readers of romance fiction, as Mills & Boon does, but address the full range of genre fiction, including martial arts, science fiction, historical novels, fan fiction, and erotica.

Innovations and Transgressions

There is a very simple reason why massively popular genre fiction websites such as Qidian are doing their share in bringing about literary innovation, specifically in the context of the mainland Chinese literary system. The reason is that none of the novels published on this site carry ISBN numbers. In China, officially no book publication is legal without an ISBN number (or 'book number' as it is called). Although much print-based publishing in China these days is made possible by the activities of privately-owned companies specializing in design, marketing, editing, proofreading, and so on, the legal act of publishing a book, by providing it with a 'book number', can only be carried out by one of the state-owned publishing houses. State-owned publishing houses employ editors who are aware of the various legal, political, and moral restrictions on content and who act as first-level censors where necessary. The bulk of censorship of print publishing in China is carried out by these editors. Yet when the serialization of online novels started to become popular, there was no equivalent system in place to regulate and censor such publications, even though for all practical purposes they are 'books'. These works are read by millions and are often so long and serialized over such long periods of time that it is physically impossible for state control mechanisms to subject them to careful scrutiny. The government has responded by issuing 'Internet Publishing Permits' to some of the larger sites, encouraging them to abide by certain principles of state regulation, such as employing experienced editors and providing links for users wanting to report illegal or offensive content. Nevertheless, it is clear just from browsing these sites that they have been given considerable room to experiment with a wide variety of transgressive writing, with the government occasionally intervening through the publication of bans and blacklists of specific works, or through specific instructions to sites to remove specific content.

As is well known from the history of pornography in Europe, transgressive writing plays an important role in on the one hand challenging the power of moralistic political (and religious) elites, while on the other hand spawning debate about the boundaries between 'vulgar' and 'serious' fiction.[2] It is therefore important to look at these 'low-end' websites

2 For a very good discussion of the role of pornography in such debates in Europe, see Lynn Hunt: Introduction. Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500–1800. In: Lynn Hunt (ed.): *The Invention of Pornography. Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500–1800*. New York: Zone Books 1996, pp. 9–46. For specific discussion of these issues with reference to literature written by and for women, and its later exclusion from the realms of 'proper' literature, see Bradford K. Mudge: *The Whore's Story. Women, Pornography, and the British Novel, 1684–1830*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000.

more closely, even though their impact in contemporary society might be less significant than that of audio-visual material. Another reason why this material deserves to be studied is that it is largely ignored by Chinese scholars, who have done otherwise excellent general scholarship on their country's Internet literature but shy away from in-depth discussion of the popularity of erotic fiction.[3]

In this essay I shall look specifically at fiction considered 'obscene and pornographic' (*yinhui seqing* 淫秽色情). I shall show how the existence of such fiction and a community supporting it exemplifies a widespread challenge to existing obscenity legislation, as well as to publishing regulation. I shall also point towards textual elements of interest in such writing as it aims to circumvent keyword-based censorship mechanisms, and look at examples of what happens when censorship does take effect. Towards the end I shall draw some tentative conclusions about the potential future impact of online genre fiction as a whole on the contemporary Chinese publishing system.

Boys' Love

The most prominent transgressive genre that has achieved gradual acceptance in recent years and is by now also tolerated (at least online) by the state system, is the genre of *danmei* 耽美, known as *tanbi* in Japan, and as 'BL' (Boys Love) in English. Fiction in this genre features romantic same-sex encounters between male protagonists, often accompanied with eroticized descriptions of sexual activity.[4] Scholars of the genre are in agreement that the vast majority of its readership is female, although there continues to be debate about the reason for this.[5] The most popular sub-genre of BL is 'slash,' a type of fan fiction which focuses on male homoerotic activity between protagonists of well-known movies, TV series, or novels. A popular form of slash, both in the West and in China, is 'SS/HP' fiction: stories describing romantic adventures featuring Severus Snape and Harry Potter. One can find English-language SS/HP sites all over the Internet but, crucially in this context, none of the English-language sites aim to make money: they share and discuss stories written or collected by contributors to the sites. On Chinese sites, however, SS/HP slash fiction, as well as, more recently, slash fiction about Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson, referring to the hugely popular BBC television series which also has a huge following in China, is often found behind the paywall.

3 The best textbook-style introduction to Chinese Internet literature that I have seen is Mei Hong 梅红 (ed.): *Wangluo wenxue* 网络文学. Chengdu: Xinan jiaotong daxue chubanshe 2010. A research group led by Ouyang Youquan 欧阳友权 at Central Southern University in Changsha has published a series of books on the topic, with the most comprehensive and accessible overview being Ouyang Youquan (ed.): *Wangluo wenxue fazhan shi. Hanyu wangluo wenxue diaocha jishi* 网络文学发展史——汉语网络文学调查纪实. Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe 2008.

4 Cf. Jin Feng: 'Addicted to Beauty'. Consuming and Producing Web-based Chinese *Danmei* Fiction at Jinjiang. *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 21.2 (2009), pp. 1–41.

5 Cf. P. J. Falzone: The Final Frontier Is Queer. Aberrancy, Archetype and Audience Generated Folklore in K/S Slashfiction. *Western Folklore* 64.3/4 (2005), pp. 243–261.

Erotic Fiction[6]

Another area where online fiction sites are increasingly challenging the limits of state regulation, though less explicitly than in the case of BL fiction, is erotic fiction. The first thing to notice here is that none of the fiction websites I have looked at actually feature a genre category called 'erotica' or 'erotic fiction.' Works with prominent sexual content appear under the 'romance' (*yanqing* 言情) section or also quite regularly under the 'urban' (*dushi* 都市) section, but in principle they could appear under any other section as well.

The existence of this category of fiction on domestic Chinese websites was highlighted by the publication, on 1 August 2007, of an official statement by the National Office for 'Eliminating Pornography and Suppressing Illegality' (Quanguo 'sao huang da fei' bangongshi 全国'扫黄打非'办公室), which is housed at the General Administration of Press and Publishing (Xinwen chuban zongshu 新闻出版总署, commonly known as 'GAPP'). The statement was titled 'Guanyu yanli chachu wangluo yinhui seqing xiaoshuo de jinji tongzhi' 关于严厉查处网络淫秽色情小说的紧急通知 (An urgent announcement about strict action against online obscene and erotic fiction). It was addressed to all national and regional offices linked to the campaign to wipe out pornographic illegal publications and the first lines read as follows:

> Taking strict action against online obscene, erotic, and other harmful material is a necessary requirement for the construction of a socialist harmonious society and for the purification of a healthy environment for youngsters and teenagers to grow up in. It is an important element of the work of 'eliminating pornography and suppressing illegality' as well as of the regulation of Internet publishing, and it is given high priority by the central leadership. Recently, GAPP has discovered that some domestic websites have published novels with obscene and erotic content. The distribution of these obscene and erotic novels disturbs the normal order of online publishing and it harms the physical and mental health of youngsters and teenagers at large. Strict action must be resolutely taken against it in accordance with the law.[7] [emphasis added]

The statement referred to a list of 40 titles of novels that were to be banned as well as a list of 348 websites publishing such fiction, although this list was not reproduced on the GAPP website where the statement was published.[8] The relevant offices throughout the country were encouraged to take immediate action to make sure any reference to the 40 banned novels was removed completely from the Internet, and to report back in three weeks' time.[9] In 2008 and

6 Following the editors of the 2006 *Encyclopedia of Erotic Literature*, I prefer to use 'erotic' rather than 'pornographic' or 'obscene,' in order to circumvent the subjective connotations of the latter two terms. Cf. Gaétan Brulotte, John Phillips (eds.): *Encyclopedia of Erotic Literature*. New York: Routledge 2006, pp. x–xii.

7 Text originally appeared on http://www.gapp.gov.cn/cms/html/21/508/200708/448580.html , but is no longer available online.

8 Text originally appeared on http://www.gapp.gov.cn/cms/html/21/367/200708/446011.html, but is no longer available online.

9 The very short deadline given to the lower offices to carry out these censoring measures seems a good example of the financial motives underlying many of the purported anti-porn activities in the PRC, i.e.

2009 GAPP stayed relatively quiet on this front, but in 2010 and 2011 they published regular blacklists of 'websites distributing obscene and erotic content.'[10] Interestingly, although the heading does not specifically mention literature or fiction, the websites singled out on these lists are virtually without exception named and shamed for providing access to obscene and erotic fiction, either online or via mobile devices, or both (the arrival of smartphones and tablets has blurred the distinction). The websites in question were not taken offline, but they were asked to take down the offensive works and they usually complied, since non-compliance would result in action taken against the site as a whole.

Laws and Definitions

The italicized passage from the 2007 GAPP statement quoted above provides useful information about the context in which this particular act of censorship took place. Firstly, it is surprising to find that GAPP did not find out until 'recently' before August 2007 that there was erotic fiction on the Chinese Internet. It was certainly there well before that date. Secondly, the reasons provided for wanting to eradicate online erotic fiction are worth scrutinizing. On the one hand, the statement claims that erotic fiction is harmful to society, especially to young people. This is a fairly common way of arguing in favour of banning pornography, seen also in various western legislations, such as the UK Obscene Publications Act, which speaks of such publications as being able to 'deprave and corrupt' those who encounter them (although UK legal practice these days rarely bothers with written pornography and focuses almost exclusively on visual representations). The idea that young people should not be exposed to pornography is even more common all over the world. The GAPP statement, however, also makes a point of indicating that the publication of erotic fiction has a negative effect on the regulation of Internet publishing. This betrays a certain anxiety about online publishing and its potential to undermine 'the system'.

Such an anxiety about wanting to keep cultural production firmly under control is typical of socialist regimes. Whenever such anxieties unexpectedly appear in the midst of what is otherwise a fairly market-driven environment, we are dealing with what can be called 'post-socialism', defined here as the lingering of remnants of socialist mentalities and behaviours after the demise of socialist institutions in society. It cannot be denied that the basic building blocks of socialist society (such as planned economy, guaranteed job allocation and housing allocation, free health care and education) are no longer in existence in mainland China. As mentioned above, the state control over publishing has also been drastically diminished, with

they are mainly about creating revenue for central government offices, which are allowed to fine regional offices which fail to meet the deadlines that they are set. Cf. Gary Sigley: Sex, Politics and the Policing of Virtue in the People's Republic of China. In: Elaine Jeffreys (ed.): *Sex and Sexuality in China*. London and New York: Routledge 2006, p. 53.

10 I am grateful to Ashley Esarey for telling me about these lists.

state-owned publishers acting as censorship agencies but the whole process of publishing otherwise being carried out by commercial companies. However, the mentality that dictates that cultural production should not take place in a 'public sphere' but should be planned and regulated by the state has certainly not disappeared and is what makes the publishing sector in China continue to be different from that in most western countries.

The fact that the various acts of censorship by GAPP described above were aimed at texts labelled as *fiction* creates an additional complication. Obscenity legislation in most countries makes exceptions for literary and/or fictional work. The Criminal Law of the PRC also does this. The relevant article is Article 367, which reads as follows:

> Obscene materials mentioned in this law refer to erotic (*huiyinxing de* 诲淫性的) books, magazines, motion pictures, video tapes, audio tapes, pictures, and other obscene materials (*yinhui wupin* 淫秽物品) that graphically describe sexual intercourse (*juti miaohui xing xingwei* 具体描绘性行为) or explicitly publicize pornography (*lugu xuanyang seqing* 露骨宣扬色情). Scientific products about physiological or medical knowledge are not obscene materials. Literary and artistic works of artistic value that contain erotic contents are not regarded as obscene materials.[11]

The text of the law shows something of a struggle with adjectives which is found also in obscenity legislation in other countries. For instance, US legislation speaks of material appealing to 'the prurient interest' or describing sexual conduct 'in a patently offensive way', while making exceptions for works of 'serious' artistic, literary, political, or scientific value. The difficulties are made even clearer in this case because of problems evident in the English translation of the law (from the Beida Law Info database). The crucial phrase 'graphic representation of sexual intercourse' in the English text of the law, which sounds very plausible and not dissimilar from definitions of pornography applied in other countries, actually does not appear in Chinese. The Chinese *juti miaohui xing xingwei* means 'concrete depiction of sexual conduct,' which is a much broader category. Finally, the phrase 'explicitly publicize pornography' is of course open to many different interpretations.

The exact definition of the key term *yinhui* has been the topic of some discussion in Chinese legal and scholarly circles in recent years. Critics have pointed out the necessity of a more detailed definition and the need for legislation to catch up with current social reality. In practice it seems that legal restrictions on the non-commercial dissemination of pornography among adults are nowadays rarely implemented. Others have advocated removing the notion of 'social harm' from discussion of pornography (which is not in the actual text of the Law but, as we have seen, figures prominently in official documents). Two later statutes (2004 and 2010) interpreting the Law seem to move in this direction, as they stipulate more severe

11 English translation from the English-language database of Chinese laws and regulations provided by Lawinfochina at Peking University (http://www.lawinfochina.com). The Chinese original can be found online in many places. The following discussions of later interpretations of the law are also based on material available to subscribers to the Lawinfochina database.

punishments for disseminating pornography to those under 18 and for producing and disseminating child pornography (defined as involving individuals under the age of 14), which comes close to indicating that there is no social harm in pornography aimed at adults. Yet so far this has not led to the development of a rating system that would make pornography aimed at those over eighteen legal, hence the issue of definition remains an important one.

Both the need for clearer definitions and the government's wish to promote 'healthy' literature were confirmed when I interviewed a GAPP official in charge of the regulation of online publishing in April 2011. He explained that the main aim of regulation is to ensure a 'healthy' development of online publishing in a way that is beneficial to the country, to society, and to the economy, while at the same time satisfying consumers' demands for online access to various types of publications. He acknowledged that much online fiction catered to a modestly-educated readership, which would explain the popularity of genre fiction such as romance, martial arts, and science fiction. When asked specifically about erotica he stated that there was a 'social consensus' in China against the promotion (*fayang* 发扬) of sex and violence. He emphasized that the blacklists of online erotic content issued by GAPP were not the result of active screening by GAPP itself but were a response to consumer complaints. The GAPP website does indeed offer Internet users the opportunity to file complaints (*jubao* 举报) about specific online material. Some of the larger fiction sites, such as Qidian, also offer such links themselves which, as we have seen, is one of the conditions they need to fulfil in order to obtain an Internet Publishing Licence. According to the official, any complaints about material that could not be straightforwardly identified as illegal or otherwise were referred to panels of 'experts', consisting of academics and industry professionals. Although he admitted that screening for specific keywords also takes place, he strongly denied that any material is ever censored by GAPP solely because of the presence of certain keywords.[12] The official took a neutral attitude towards the question of how to deal with literary, fictional material: anything judged to be legal by the panel of experts, literary or otherwise, was unproblematic. However, referring to the example of film censorship in the West, he acknowledged that it would be helpful to have different levels (*jibie* 级别) of censorship based on age limits, and to have a more specific definition of what does and does not constitute pornography.

12 This might seem implausible to those familiar with the censoring practices that take place, for instance, on China's popular Weibo 微博 microblogging service, where the use of certain keywords often leads to immediate deletion of material. However, the point here is that such censorship is done by the Sina Weibo 新浪微博 editors themselves, as a crude yet effective way of staying out of trouble with the authorities. The key role of editors in the PRC censorship system will be discussed further below.

Community Response

Whether or not there is indeed a social consensus against pornography in China is difficult to ascertain. What seems to be clear from the above discussion is that erotic content in acknowledged 'serious' literature no longer constitutes a problem. For instance, the Chinese translation of D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, which was banned in 1986, has been widely available in China for at least a decade now, despite the fact that the most detailed official government definition of obscenity, laid down in a GAPP statement from the late 1980s and used at the time to ban Lawrence's book, has not officially been superseded by any other definition. Clearly, the government's own perception of what is or is not 'healthy' and what is or is not socially permissible has moved on since 1986. For the established literary community, i.e. the community underpinned by state-owned commercial publishers, literary journals, and university-based critics, there appear to be no obvious restrictions to the treatment of sex in literature. Sex features prominently in many contemporary works of fiction and sex-related censorship of work with clearly articulated artistic aims is rare, especially if such work has gone through the established system of editing and publishing.

The problem with online fiction, as mentioned above, is that it differs from the established system. This explains why, as we have seen, the censorship of online erotica is based not only on concerns for social harm but also on concerns for disturbance of the 'regular' system of online publishing, a system that, after all, is still in its infancy and that is not easy to control. Crucial to the success of regulation of online publishing is the willingness of web editors to ensure that the content they host remains within legal, political, and moral boundaries. In the specific case of erotic fiction, the approach taken so far seems to have yielded the required results. For instance, the 40 works of erotic fiction banned by GAPP in August 2007 are not easily found on PRC-based websites. Since the published version of the GAPP announcement did not include the list of 40 titles and the subsequent censoring was relatively successful, it is in fact quite rare to come across the actual list of titles. The later blacklists from 2010 and 2011 also do not mention titles of works but only names of websites where offensive content was encountered. I assume this is done so that it makes it harder for Internet users to search for these specific titles.

However, responses from some Internet users to the 2007 announcement demonstrate mild amusement, indicating that certainly not all community members feel there is much need for censorship of erotic fiction. These amused, rather than incensed, community responses also warrant the suspicion that the censorship is not overly effective in blocking access to banned works for those who really want to get to it (although I would maintain that it has succeeded in minimalizing public exposure of the works in question). One forum moderator of an online file-sharing site copied the full text of the announcement and the list of titles onto the forum and added that if any of these works were to be put on the ebook-sharing section of the site, the culprits would be severely punished! This was followed by a few smileys, and more tongue-in-cheek responses from other forum contributors, as well as a link to a mass

file download using the thunder:// protocol. Presumably this particular community was able to share some or all of the blacklisted works privately or had other ways of accessing them, and found the whole episode quite funny. Another playful response came from a contributor to an image-based wiki site, who created the wiki item 'obscene and pornographic fiction,' accompanied by a brief description of the GAPP announcement, as well as an image of a scantily dressed woman printed across the pages of a book.

A very clever response came from yet another forum moderator, who copied the GAPP announcement verbatim and then added two images. The first was the list of 40 titles, turned into an image so as to avoid automatic keyword detection. The second was an image of ketchup being poured onto a sausage, obviously presented in such a way as to trigger associations with the act of fellatio. Although presumably offensive to some, this particular response very forcefully makes the familiar point that the perception of pornography is subjective: what is a ketchup bottle to some, is an explicitly erotic image to others. Moreover, there is no feasible way in which the publication of such an image might be considered illegal, even when it is juxtaposed with the official GAPP announcement and clearly is ridiculing the stated government policy. Other contributors to the forum were equally amused and left equally playful messages, such as 'Wow, I did not know there were so many novels like that out there,' or 'What an arduous task for the comrades at GAPP to have to read all those novels,' and so on. Some even mentioned which novels on the list they had read and which were their favourites.

Legal Erotic Fiction and Censorship Avoidance

A salient aspect of the blacklists of obscene and pornographic fiction published at regular intervals by GAPP in 2010 and 2011 is the fact that a small number of websites constantly featured in the top five transgressors. Clearly these sites continuously publish transgressive work, pushing the boundaries of what is permissible (to the authorities) and/or acceptable (to its readers) and taking the risk of occasionally having to remove content that went too far. One of these sites is 'Feilu xiaoshuo wang' 飞卢小说网 (Flying gourd fiction)[13], a medium-sized fiction site operating the business model for online serialized fiction described above.

The Feilu front page does not make it look much different from other fiction sites. The main genre categories are also similar to those of other sites and include fantasy, martial arts, romance/urban, youth/campus, BL/fan fiction, historical fiction, and horror fiction. Like Qidian and other sites, Feilu also has a separate women's section, represented on the main page by a pink-coloured area. Also like Qidian, access to their VIP works is charged at 3 *fen* 分 per 1,000 words. They have a certain number of contracted authors and they also offer unfamiliar authors the opportunity to serialize their writing. Authors who send in regular instalments and manage to cultivate a sizeable readership, as well as gain positive comments

13 http://b.faloo.com

('likes') from readers, can make their way up the rank tables, which may result in their being offered a contract. Typically, popular novels on the site will offer around one hundred chapters for free and then switch to VIP mode, a process referred to as *shangjia* 上架 (getting on the perch). Around 2011, the site contained much sex-related advertising, not on its front page but on the pages devoted to popular novels. This has since been toned down and advertising is now more sparse and generally user-focused.

In 2011, although there was far too much content on the site to venture a guess as to how much of it is erotic in nature, it was certainly not difficult to find erotic texts, for instance by looking specifically at those that had references to women in the title or that employ vocabulary traditionally associated with the erotic tradition, i.e. words like *xiang* 香 (fragrant), *yan* 艳 (beautiful/romantic), and so on.[14] None of the works I saw were consistently erotic in every chapter. Most only became explicit after a few chapters and returned to sexual themes every three to five chapters. This may have depended in part on the speed with which the authors updated their work. If they posted several chapters a day, which is not unusual, they might have limited the erotic chapters to one a day, as a kind of regular dosage for readers to get used to and look forward to. Works set in contemporary times often featured the seedy world of crime and official corruption, signalled by the very high proportion of novels with the word *guanchang* 官场 (officialdom) in the title. Based solely on textual evidence taken from the fiction as well as the many paratexts often attached to these works it seemed at the time that depictions of official corruption were not in any way problematic but descriptions of sexual activity required the application of specific censorship avoidance techniques, similar to those that have been observed in the study of online political discourse.

The most common way of avoiding drawing attention from censors to erotic work is by disguising sensitive keywords that might trigger alerts. This is commonly done either by writing such words in *pinyin* 拼音 or by inserting a symbol, such as an asterisk, in between the two characters that make up a compound. In 2011, references to certain body parts, for instance breasts, were rarely encountered in normal writing, and the same applied to words such as *yuwang* 欲望 (sexual desire) and *gaochao* 高潮 (orgasm). Nowadays (January 2016), the use of explicit language has been toned down even further, with even the word for 'bed' (*chuang* 床) consistently appearing in transliteration rather than in characters.

To some extent these word games were and are necessitated (as indicated by a participant in a discussion on one of the site's message boards) by keyword screening software built in to the website system. When authors upload their texts, certain sensitive words are refused by the system. Yet in addition to this, the editors of the site also carry out their own checks and make changes where they deem it necessary. Either the system, or the editors, also at times seem to refuse the repetition of certain otherwise innocuous words within too limited

14 When I interviewed two of the site's editors in April 2011, they also confirmed their preference for work that was 'ambiguous' (*aimei* 暧昧) and 'a bit erotic' (*you dianr se* 有点儿色), although they made a point of stating that they attempt to stay well within legal limits.

a space. For instance in the same chapter of 'A Female Teacher in the World of Officialdom' the word *ruan* 软 (soft) appears twice in one sentence, both times in *pinyin*. Occasionally this leads to amusing results, as in Chapter 20 of the novel *Aishang jipin MM* 爱上极品MM (In love with top quality girls), where one of the protagonists is cooking chicken for dinner, and the word *ji* 鸡for chicken (which can also mean 'penis'), is rendered in *pinyin* three times in the space of three sentences, making it appear like a transgressive term even though it is not.

In 2011, another common mechanism employed to avoid overly graphic writing was to describe sexual activity with recourse to a flowery linguistic register, some of which goes back to language used in traditional erotic fiction, or by employing euphemisms. The passage below, from Chapter 20 of *In Love with Top Quality Girls* purposefully translated very literally, gives a good impression of the kind of writing that characterizes the works I saw on the site in 2011:

> Yang Dong immediately stood up straight on the bed. Liu Li slowly crawled in front of Yang Dong, kneeling by his body, respectfully kneeling with both knees on the bed, while she kept her pitch-black eyes fixed on the man. Yang Dong looked down at Liu Li: her fragrant hair, spread out over her snow-white, smooth, jade-like back looked very sexy. Yang Dong's lower body instantly felt unbearable so he instantly issued a command to Liu Li, gently using one hand to press the woman's jade-like head against his own crotch.... Liu Li startled for a moment, perhaps because that spot of his was too much of a 'magnificent sight' for her. Gently she showed the man her delicate pretty face and with an expression of deep emotion she looked at the man. At this moment, her arched eyebrows, her bright eyes, her thin high nose, and her bright red lips all seemed extremely seductive.[15]

Naturally this is clumsy and repetitive writing, but there is more to be said in this case. *In Love with Top Quality Girls* was one of two novels that appear to have got the Feilu website into trouble in June 2011. On 8 June the site manager submitted a post to the site's discussion forum under the title 'Lühua wangzhan huanjing, shuli jiankang xingxiang' 绿化网站环境，树立健康形象 (Create a green website environment and foster a healthy image). He indicated that two of their regular VIP authors, which they themselves had cultivated (*peiyang* 培养) had started to include large amounts of 'bad content' (*bu liang neirong* 不良内容) into their works, thereby showing their 'disrespect' towards their readership, their 'lack of responsibility' towards the site, and their own 'betrayal' of their original intentions as writers. In response, he announced, the website would launch a long-term censorship/control (*jiancha* 检查) drive. He expressed the hope that all authors would 'stick to the moral bottom line' (*jianshou daode dixian* 坚守道德底线) and act as 'writers with a sense of social responsibility.' Two writers and works were singled out as the offenders. Both were fined part of their wages as VIP authors and instructed to rewrite the offensive passages within 72 hours.

One of the two works, entitled *The King of Copulation in the City* (Yünü tianwang zai dushi 御女天王在都市) was not revised but taken off the site. The author wrote a formal self-criticism which was published on the site's discussion forum. The other censored work was

15 Original no longer available online, but preserved in the Internet Archive Wayback Machine: https://web.archive.org/web/20110920060103/http://b.faloo.com/p/185150/18.html

In Love with Top Quality Girls, cited above. Its author, who goes by the pseudonym 'Chenmo de li' 沉默的狸 (The silent racoon dog), responded very differently and immediately set to work on the revisions, even adding a cheerful paratext to the area reserved for author's comments on their own work, which read:

> Brother Racoon is embarrassed to inform everybody that the uncle from the Internet Police has detected a few of my chapters that were written too graphically (lugu). Some chapters are now banned, so you might not be able to read them. Don't be angry with me, okay? I have started rewriting tonight and I will do my very best to make sure that the ban is lifted as soon as possible.[16]

The next day he published another announcement informing his readers that all banned chapters had been revised. Moreover, he painstakingly indicated in the table of contents which chapters had been revised. At the time, 251 chapters of the novel had been published and according to the new table of contents, 50 of those were revised. The publication went on for much longer, as it reached well over 400 chapters, although currently it is no longer available on the site.[17]

The chapter from which I cited a passage above was among the ones that were revised, i.e. what I cited was the revised text, adjusted to comply with censorship requirements. Although I do not have access to the earlier, unrevised text, I do have a saved version of one chapter of the other novel that was banned, which can provide some indication as to what it is that is considered to cross the line in these cases. The chapter in question employs the various censorship avoidance mechanisms referred to above but it is indeed somewhat more graphic (although still euphemistic) in its description of intercourse, ejaculation, and sexual organs. The fact that even the revised version of the novel is now no longer available and that, generally speaking, the stories on the website seem to avoid explicit descriptions altogether, resorting instead to more and more innuendo, shows that the bottom line has shifted, or perhaps that Feilu has decided to err on the side of caution in order to protect its commercial interests. Either way, what is clear is that censorship of erotic fiction focuses almost exclusively on the use of specific vocabulary. There is no attempt whatsoever by the regulators to raise the moral standards or the literary quality of the works, as long as they stick to the required levels of prudishness in their use of words and descriptions.

16 Original no longer available online, but preserved in the Internet Archive Wayback Machine: https://web.archive.org/web/20110919211433/http://b.faloo.com/p/185150/263.html

17 Snapshots of the front page of the novel were taken thirty-three times over the course of four years by the Internet Archive Wayback Machine. They show that the work grew to 446 chapters by 21 January 2013. After that the author ceased to add new chapters and somewhere between April and July 2014 the novel was removed from the site. Cf. https://web.archive.org/web/20140401165539*/http://b.faloo.com/f/185150.html .

Conclusion

This brief case study of online erotica in the PRC has provided useful insights into the way in which the Chinese authorities hope to regulate online publishing. Faced with the commercial success of genre fiction sites such as Qidian and with the sudden emergence of a non-state-owned publishing sector producing book-length publications without book numbers, PRC publishing authorities use a combination of incentives and deterrents to encourage online literature companies to apply for 'Internet Publishing Permits' [referred to as Permits also on p.3, but on p.8 they are called 'Licences'] and thereby voluntarily comply with roughly the same editorial standards that also apply to print publishing. As far as censorship is concerned, the system relies on a similar mechanism to the one which exists in print publishing, namely on editors taking responsibility for the majority of censorship activity, and also taking most of the blame when something is overlooked. Although it is accepted that the Internet is far too large a space to be completely controlled, the hope of the regulators is that at least the large commercial sites will accept the rules, which by and large they do. Whether or not the regulators will at some point be allowed to relinquish the ideological adherence to anti-pornography actions without any reference to age categories remains to be seen. At this writing, the Xi Jinping regime strongly emphasizes the continued need for culture to be 'healthy' in terms of its morality and there is no indication that 'healthy' can mean different things to people of different ages. What is salient is that both Xi Jinping in his speeches and the regulators in their recent documents have taken recourse to a very old set of concepts from western philosophy and aesthetics to describe their ideal cultural product as 'true, good, and beautiful' (*zhen shan mei* 真善美).

The popularity of online genre fiction also helps bring about change. In recent years, there has been more and more collaboration between print publishers and online publishers in the production of bestsellers based on works that originated in cyberspace. A recent policy document issued by GAPP in January 2015 emphasized the need for online fiction to be 'clean and healthy' and aspire to 'high standards', but at the same time it also explicitly encouraged collaboration between print publishers (i.e. state-owned publishers) and online publishers. The idea seems to be that state-owned publishers can teach online publishers how to toe the line, whereas online publishers can teach state-owned publishers how to be more commercial. The widely anticipated outcome of this process is that, within the next five years or so, China will start to dismantle the network of state-owned publishers, replacing it with a small number of very large commercial publishing corporations that know how to play by the rules without relying on state subsidy. This will mean the dismantling of a system that has been in place since the founding of the People's Republic, but it will not mean the end of censorship, and sanctions are likely to stay in place for those crossing the 'bottom line', whatever it happens to be at any given time.

12
Production of Consumption, Consumption of Production: Readers Empowered, Authors Enabled and Digital Prosumption Facilitated in the Landscape of Popular Literature in China

Shih-chen Chao

Introduction

This chapter examines the ways in which digital media and especially the Internet plays an unprecedented role in providing an alternative medium to books in regard to facilitating the production and consumption of popular literature. Using Qidian 起點 (Starting point),[1] the most successful commercial literary portal website in China, as a case study, this study aims to demonstrate the ubiquity and the power of the Internet for facilitating easy production and consumption at an unsurpassedly massive scale and thus to re-configure the landscape of Chinese contemporary popular literature. The re-configuration lies in the fact that digital media pose a challenge to books as the dominant medium for authors and readers to produce and consume literary works. The first part of the chapter examines the empowerment of readers, the second part analyzes the enabling of authors but also the challenges they face, and the third part focuses on the co-creation of popularity rankings directly engaged in by readers and authors to demonstrate how digital publishing can simplify access for both. The three parts will illustrate the notion of digital prosumption[2] facilitated by the diversely interactive features associated with the digital media to argue that the distinction between production and consumption, between authors and readers, has diminished to the point where Internet users who visit literary portal websites have the opportunity and potential to switch between being authors and readers relatively effortlessly. Although this study concentrates only on the website of the Qidian literary portal, the business model empowered, enabled and facilitated by the various social media functions on Qidian has been massively replicated in China on other literary portal websites. This has given rise to the new phenomenon of 'digital prosumption' of popular literature in China today.

1 On Qidian, see also Chapters 11 and 13.

2 Ritzer defines the notion of prosumption as 'the interrelated process of production and consumption' in the content and he links the notion of prosumption to 'especially on the Internet where people "prosume", for example, Facebook pages, Wikipedia entries, and Amazon.com orders'. George Ritzer: Prosumption: Evolution, Revolution, or Eternal Return of the Same? *Journal of Consumer Culture* 14:1 (2014), p. 1. In the context of Internet popular literature, netizens prosume literary works in the sense of writing and publishing literary works as authors, but also by consuming literary works by others as online readers.

Technology, Participatory Culture and Prosumption

In his *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) Michel de Certeau elaborates his observation of the production and consumption relationship between hegemonic institution and the individual in the West. Adopting the pair of terms 'strategies' and 'tactics' to explicate the notion of a constant struggle between production and consumption, Certeau argues that, as hegemonic producers of various cultural substances monopolize socio-political and cultural resources, individuals are more subject to the dominance of economic institutional power and social order, presented in terms of strategies of mass production. While this is true to a certain extent, numerous individuals do not simply yield to the dominant, institutional power of production and command. On the contrary, they actively alter the cultural substances for different purposes. These individuals, who are general consumers, are strenuously implementing their individualized tactics to re-use, utilize and customize various cultural substances to meet their needs for investing the consumption process with a new significance of individual production at the grass-roots level, despite the fact that individual production is often marginalized by the hegemonic order. That is to say, general consumers, who are the 'dominated element'[3] in Certeau's terms, are able to manipulate and appropriate numerous cultural texts produced by 'strategy'—i.e. the dominant socio-economic and institutional power. The appropriation of diverse cultural texts, on an individual level and to a different extent, is 'tactics', a seemingly 'silent production'.[4] By employing these tactics, individuals maintain their space within the strategy to grant themselves individualized interpretations of the cultural subjects or contexts which the hegemonic system attempts to regulate. By adopting the terms 'strategy' and 'tactics', with their military implications, to explain the relationship between production and consumption, Certeau articulates what he envisages as the constant struggle between production and consumption in the multitude of cultural contexts permeating our society.

Arguably, the struggle against hegemonic order can be said to be partially empowered, enabled and facilitated by the advent of new technology. The rise of female media fandom of *Star Trek* in the US in the 1960s, for example, was largely enabled due to the technology of photocopying, making mass production on an individual level possible.[5] The fans of a

3 Michel de Certeau: Introduction. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven F. Rendall. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 1984, pp. xi–xii.

4 Certeau: *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Certeau's term of silent production describes how during consumption the dominated (i.e. the consumers) use tactics to turn consumption into production. I have added the adverb 'seemingly' prior to 'silent production' because de Certeau also argues that 'silent production' is not really silent at all, and points out that consumers, despite being a dominated element, are not necessarily 'either passive or docile'. Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. xii.

5 The invention of photocopying machines enabled female sci-fi TV fans to engage in large-scale production of their creative writings, based on their favourite TV characters, and to circulate them within various fan communities. Henry Jenkins: *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. New York;

particular movie or TV series were hence able to appropriate the cultural context to produce fan fiction, and to sell and distribute copies of it enabled by photocopiers at fan-oriented conventions. By doing this, the fans became what Henry Jenkins describes as 'textual poachers'[6] who acted as proactive constructors of an alternative cultural text, making them also producers in this sense. With greater advances in technology for mass communication, more opportunities arise for general consumers to participate in cultural product creation and share the finished products with others. The element of mass participation and sharing re-configures the struggles between production and consumption and blurs the long-standing distinction between production and consumption.

Today, the Internet contributes to the blurred boundary between production and consumption. General consumers are able to take on the role of producers as they wish, assuming that they have access to the appropriate digital equipment and the Internet to embark on their 'loud production'.[7] One day netizens can become writers when they publish writing online; the next day they can take on the role of short film producers when they create footage on a personal device to share it with the world. Examples such as Wikipedia, Youtube, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook are already everyday activities which enable netizens to carry out loud production. The extent to which netizens are either consumers or producers is entirely determined by them. Whereas some netizens prefer to retain their identity as latent consumers by simply receiving information, many others take on a proactive attitude and assume the role of producers to produce and share their works on different digital platforms. Some of them are so much engaged that they achieve celebrity status. The enormous amount of attention that they receive is often converted into personal economic resources. Although the extent to which netizens intend to play with the notion of crossing between the role of consumers and that of producers is not well-established, the message is clear. The distinction between consumption and production is diminishing.

Nevertheless, not only is the major and fundamental change on this vanishing borderline between consumption and production simply instigated and facilitated by the advent of the Internet, it is also promoted by the ubiquity of a digital and networked participatory culture of Web 2.0, gaming and smartphone applications.[8] What Web 2.0, gaming and apps have

London: Routledge 1992; Henry Jenkins: Quentin Tarantino's Star Wars?: Digital Cinema, Media Convergence, and Participatory Culture. In: Meenakshi Gigi Durham/Douglas M. Kellner (eds): *Media and Cultural Studies: Keyworks*. Oxford: Blackwell 2006, pp. 549–79.

6 Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, pp. 1–8.

7 I have intentionally used the phrase 'loud production' as a contrast to 'silent production'—the term Certeau proposes to refer to individual production—because netizens today can assume the role of producers to take part in cultural production much more easily, and their products receive general netizens' attention more readily and on a larger scale since the advent of the Internet. See also further in this chapter.

8 Henry Jenkins/Mizuko Ito/Danah Boyd: Learning and Literacy. In: *Participatory Culture in a Networked Era: A Conversation on Youth, Learning, Commerce and Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press 2016, pp. 90–119.

in common is the feature of interactivity, which distinguishes them from Web 1.0 whose main function consisted in the provision of information via a search engine, and which was 'predominantly unidirectional and less engaging and participatory'.[9] Web 2.0, gaming and apps are characterized by a favourable and easier network environment that allows netizens to participate in online activities, to communicate, and to share their production. This digital and networked participatory culture empowers the notion of 'digital prosumption' whereby, in a nutshell, netizens see the tendency of the roles of 'producer and consumer, writer and reader, speaker and audience'[10] merge into one within a digital and networked participatory environment. In this sense, what Certeau proposes as 'silent production' has now turned online into 'loud production'.

Internet Literature in China: From a Virtual Community for Overseas Chinese to the Overwhelming Success of the Qidian Model in China

The Internet was officially introduced into China in April 1994.[11] In only twenty years, China has become the world's largest wired nation, and much of the empowering, enabling and facilitating needed to instigate new participatory cultures in a digital, networked environment has already taken place. The latest Internet development statistics released by the state-sponsored organization China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) in their 37th annual report published in January 2016 showed that China has a wired population of 688 million, an increase of 39.51 million netizens since June 2015. The Internet penetration rate has reached 50.3 per cent. The mobile population is 602 million, accounting for 90.1 per cent of the whole Internet netizen population.[12] An examination of common Internet activities listed in the report shows that, apart from the globally similar Internet activities such as browsing online, using search engines, listening to music, video streaming, online shopping and banking, in China the consumption and production of Internet literature stands out as a particularly popular. When cross-checked against the globally popular online activities, it becomes obvious that Internet literature seems to play a more significant role

9 Eran Fisher points out that Web 1.0 grants users access to information through search engines, whereas Web 2.0 allows users to participate in the production process. Eran Fisher: The Dialectics of Prosumption in the Digital Age. In: Olivier Frayssé/Mathieu O'Neil (eds): *Digital Labour and Prosumer Capitalism: The US Matrix*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2015, pp. 125–44.

10 Fisher, The Dialectics of Prosumption in the Digital Age, p. 125.

11 Zhongguo hulian wangluo xinxi zhongxin 中國互聯網絡信息中心 (CNNIC): *Yijiu jiusi nian~yijiu jiuliu nian hulianwang dashiji* 1994年～1996年互聯網大事記. 26 May 2009. http://www.cnnic.cn/hlwfzyj/hlwdsj/201206/t20120612_27415.htm (20 December 2015).

12 Zhongguo hulian wangluo xinxi zhongxin 中國互聯網絡信息中心 (CNNIC): *Zhongguo hulian wangluo fazhan zhuangkuang tongji baogao* 中國互聯網絡發展狀況統計報告. January 2016. http://www.cnnic.cn/hlwfzyj/hlwxzbg/hlwtjbg/201601/P020160122444930951954.pdf, p. 1 (20 May 2016).

in the everyday behaviour of Chinese netizens. For instance, a report published in October 2015 about global Internet usage did not include consuming and producing literature online as one of the most popular Internet activities.[13] In contrast, in CNNIC's 37th annual report (20 May 2016), Internet literature was ranked tenth in a list of the top twenty most popular online activities, with the total Internet literature population reaching 296.74 million. This number accounts for 43.1 per cent of the whole netizen population in China. In the same report, mobile netizens' behaviour was also examined. Of Chinese mobile netizens, 41.8 per cent (259.08 million people) regularly access Internet literature using mobile devices.[14] The rapid development of Internet literature does not mean that it completely substitutes traditional printing; even so the development does provide a new and alternative model to facilitate consumption and production of literature online.

It is claimed that Internet literature in China started in 1991, in the US when a Chinese professional residing there published a short story titled *Fenduo yu pingdeng* 奮鬥與平等 (Struggle and equality) describing his efforts to have a decent life in a foreign land as an alien. This story was published in a virtual community known as *Huaxia wenzhai* 華夏文摘 (China news digest). From then on, amateur writers found a new platform to publish and share their works via digital magazines, personal websites or Bulletin Board Systems.[15] However, a more widespread trend of publishing one's own works online did not start until 1997, when Rongshuxia 榕樹下 (Under the Banyan Tree)[16] was established in Shanghai as the first literary portal website in China. Rongshuxia offered an unprecedented social platform for readers and amateur writers to consume and produce original literary works easily. Netizens only needed to register an account with the portal website to become users. Once granted access, netizens could take control of what they wanted to do—they were able to choose which genre and piece of work to consume, to comment or offer feedback on, and could even start writing and sharing their works. A number of well-known contemporary Chinese writers such as Han Han 韓寒 (b. 1982)[17] and Guo Jingming 郭敬明 (b. 1983) started their writing career with Rongshuxia.[18] Soon numerous literary portal websites were set up replicating this business idea in China. One of these which stood out and has

13 Global Internet Usage — Statista Dossier. October 2015. http://www.statista.com/study/12322/global-Internet-usage-statista-dossier/ (20 December 2015). This report lists the most popular mobile Internet practices globally. Reading news ranked in first place and was the only primarily reading-oriented activity on the list.

14 CNNIC, *Zhongguo hulian wangluo fazhan zhuangkuang tongji baogao,* pp. 52–53.

15 For more details of the history of Internet literature in China, see Shih-Chen Chao: Desire and Fantasy On-line: A Sociological and Psychoanalytical Approach to the Prosumption of Chinese Internet Fiction. PhD. dissertation, University of Manchester 2012, pp. 10–17.

16 Official webpage: www.rongshuxia.com (4 January 2016). On Rongshu xia see also Chapters 9 and 10.

17 On Han Han see also Chapter 14.

18 *Guanyu women* 關於我們. 29 June 2015. http://www.rongshuxia.com/news/19.html (21 December 2015).

significantly contributed to commercializing original popular literature written by amateur writers is Qidian wenxue 起點文學 (Starting point literature; hereafter Qidian), currently a subsidiary of the Tencent Corporation.

In November 2001 a fan-oriented literary portal site was founded by a group of fantasy fiction fans. The site was known as Xuanhuan wenxue xiehui 玄幻文學協會 (China magic fantasy Union, hereafter cmfu) at www.cmfu.net to promote fantasy writings, and later the domain name was changed to www.cmfu.com. In May 2002, the cmfu core group launched a portal site called Qidian.[19] With growing success in attracting readers and amateur writers, cmfu initiated a new business model in 2003 by charging readers for access to popular serialized works by chapters. Readers began paying with virtual currency in order to read more upcoming chapters of a popular work.[20] In the same year, cmfu was renamed Qidian zhongwen wang 起點中文網 (Starting point Chinese net; hereafter Qidian Chinese Net). This rapid development not only made Qidian Chinese Net a household name in China for Internet literature, but it was also ranked the hundredth most popular website globally by Alexa in April 2004, making it the first literary portal website to be ranked in the top 100 in the world.[21] In October 2004, Shanda Corporation, whose business started with online gaming, acquired Qidian Chinese Net. In July 2008, Shanda Corporation set up Shanda wenxue 盛大文學 (Shanda literature corp. Ltd) to be merged with Shanda youxi 盛大遊戲 (Shanda games) for creating a better interactive entertainment enterprise.[22] In 2010, Shanda Corporation established the Cloudary Corporation to invest in various business and literary portal websites. There were eight such websites in which Shanda Corporation invested, including some of the most popular literary portal websites such as Qidian Chinese Net and its affiliated channels, Hongxiu tianxiang 紅袖添香 (Perfumed red sleeves)[23], Rongshuxia and Xiaoshuo yuedu wang 小說閱讀網 (Novel reading).[24] The Cloudary Literature sector in its heyday had more than 70 per cent of the market share of Internet literature in China.[25] Nevertheless, the core

19 *Guanyu* Qidian 關於起點. http://wwwploy.qidian.com/HelpCenter/default.aspx?type=0&categoryid=28&parentid=4 (21 December 2015).

20 Michel Hockx: *Internet Literature in China*. New York: Columbia University Press 2015, p. 110.

21 Guanyu Qidian 關於起點. Alexa is a web trafficking company, now a subsidiary of Amazon.com.

22 History. http://www.snda.com/contact-us/shanda-history?lang=en (21 December 2015).

23 Official webpage: www.hongxiu.com (4 January 2016). This portal website is for romance narratives only.

24 Official webpage: www.readnovel.com (3 January 2016). This portal also has a male-oriented channel and a female-oriented channel.

25 Sophie Rochester and Xin Lin: The Publishing Landscape in China: New and Emerging Opportunities for British Writers. Arts & Humanities Research Council, 2015. http://theliteraryplatform.com/collective/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/05/The_Publishing_Landscape_in_China_2015.pdf, p.33 (21 December 2015). It has not been possible to access any of the websites related to Cloudary, such as www.cloudary.com.cn, ever since Tencent acquired Qidian.

management group of Qidian decided to break away from the Cloudary group and in 2014 Qidian joined Tencent[26], forming the largest Internet literature business sector in China.

The Internet Literature Prosumption Model: From Fan-Oriented Participation Model to Commercial Establishment Model

As the genealogy described above shows, Qidian Chinese Net established a rather unique model in appealing to general netizens to consume and to produce popular literary works, and has had this model replicated on other Qidian-affiliated literary websites. Being the literary portal website with the largest market share, Qidian's model started from a fan-oriented participation model but developed into a commercial establishment model replete with innovative ideas to engage fans in various routes of production and consumption for commercialization, the scale of which exceeds any outside the Chinese-speaking world. In the next section, I shall re-visit the notions of readers as consumers and authors as producers instantiated by the Qidian model[27] to examine how the new model implements the notion of digital prosumption, whereby both readers and authors are empowered and enabled in different ways. The empowerment and enablement, facilitated by digital platforms, helps the distinction traditionally separated these two roles to diminish, which contributes towards digital prosumption. This digital prosumption re-configures the landscape of popular literature and, to a large extent, the notion of books in China today.

26 Jiemi shengda ziben: sannian sawangguo baixiangmu Chen Tianqiao de jingxian VC yiyue 解密盛大資本:3年撒網过百項目陳天橋的驚險VC一躍. 20 October 2014. http://www.snda.com/sndanews/解密盛大资本:3年撒网过百项目-陈天桥的惊险vc一.html?lang=zh-hans (23 December 2015).

27 It is worth noting that even though Qidian arguably initiated the unique pay-to-read model with many other innovative features incorporated over time, it is not a perfect system in the sense that the portal site is not maintained consistently. When examining the portal website, I have come across several pieces of inconsistent or contradictory information. For instance, the literary genres advertised on the home page (www.qidian.com, 24 December 2015) are not consistent with the literary genres advertised in their *shuku* 書庫 (book warehouse; see http://all.qidian.com/Default.aspx, 24 December 2015). Some legacy functions (e.g. *pingba* 評吧 or comment bar) are no longer advertised on the homepage, but still appear in their *bangzhu zhongxin* 幫助中心 (help centre; see http://wwwploy.qidian.com/helpcenter/default.aspx, 24 December 2015). However, when users click on the weblink for the function they are redirected back to the homepage. In addition, Qidian wenxue wang 起點文學網, one of the affiliated nets still advertised on Qidian's main page, has been disabled. While a fast-developing enterprise such as Qidian sees the need to constantly update the website, the maintenance is not correctly carried out and leaves behind some confusing information. For this study I rely on information available on the home page in case of inconsistencies or contradictions.

Qidian Chinese Net[28] has three internal affiliated 'Nets': Qidian nüsheng wang 起點女生網 (Starting point women's net, hereafter 'Qidian Women's Net')[29], Qidian wenxue wang 起點文學網 (Starting point literature net, a legacy net)[30], and one book-publishing channel, Qidian yuedu 起點閱讀 (Qidian read).[31] When accessing Qidian Chinese Net, netizens, whether as readers or as authors, can easily see links to the other nets to suit their individual preference. Qidian Chinese Net will be the primary focus of this study, with Qidian Women's Net as the secondary focus.

Consuming and Producing Popular Literature on Social Media: Empowering Readers, Enabling Authors, Facilitating Digital Prosumption

Empowered Readers: Decision-making, Participation and Prosumption

Readers visiting Qidian face complicated and challenging choices. The first task is to choose what they want to do. Generally speaking, there are three tiers of options to choose from (see Figures 1 and 2). The first tier is which 'Net' to visit. Those who are interested in romance narratives, for example, can visit Qidian Women's Net. The second tier is what action to take if netizens decide to stay on one specific net. Take Qidian Chinese Net for instance; netizens can do much more than just consuming literary works, and can choose from a number of non-literary related options such as topping-up their account(s), online shopping or online gaming. The third tier is that when netizens decide to carry out literary-related activities, they will face an immediate challenge—which genre and which pieces of work to select from. On Qidian Chinese Net, more than fourteen literary genres and more than 1.4 million pieces of work, some of them finished and some on-going are offered.[32] Similarly, on Qidian Women's Net,

28 Its homepage is at www.qidian.com. Though not clearly specified, Qidian Chinese Net is oriented towards a male readership, and most successful authors on the website are male. The content of the popular works featured on Qidian Chinese Net is also male-oriented.

29 www.qdmm.com was established in November 2009. The website is oriented towards a female readership. The MM in this context refers to *meimei* 妹妹 (young girls). It is a cute way to refer to young girls in general in modern Chinese. As the use of the term MM suggests, all the works, no matter which genre they belong to, are heavily romance-oriented in their content.

30 www.qdwenxue.com was only set up in November 2010. Zhou Yuan 周媛*:* Qidian *wenxue wang kaizhang gonggao* 起點文學網開戰公告. 8 November 2010. http://www.qidian.com/News/ShowNews.aspx?Newsid=1016883 (24 December 2015). For some unknown reason Qidian still keeps this legacy net on its homepage.

31 Qidian *yuedu* was set up in 2010. It follows a more traditional route of book printing and Qidian editors play a more prominent role in deciding which literary works to publish in book format. See *Guanyu* Qidian.

32 The exact number was 1,435,811 on Qidian Chinese Net. See http://all.qidian.com/Default.aspx (1 January 2016) and 95,945 on Qidian Women's Net: http://wwwploy.qidian.com/HelpCenter/default.aspx?type=0&categoryid=42&parentid=21 (1 January 2016).

there are over 90,000 romance narratives, including both completed and in-progress works. Overall, Qidian offers netizens an enormous collection of popular literature to consume, with the number of the literary works growing constantly.

Figure 1: Homepage of Qidian Chinese Net (Screenshot taken on 22 December 2015).

Figure 2: Homepage of Qidian Women's Net (Screenshot taken on 22 December 2015).

Netizens can decide to opt only for free sampling of a piece of work, but without a valid Qidian account the free sampling quota is limited to three chapters. Should the netizens wish to continue reading, they need to log in or sign up. The numerous functions on the webpage are not enabled until they hold a valid Qidian account and log into the system.

The Qidian webpage offers a simplified flowchart of five steps to obtain a valid account as a reader, i.e. *zhuce* 注冊 (registration), *yuedu* 閱讀 (read), *chongzhi* 充值 (top-up), *shengji* 升級 (VIP upgrade) and *dingyue* 訂閱 (subscription).[33] For each step there is a link to obtain more relevant information. For those who have not registered before, extra information to help them with the procedure is available at Qidian's help centre. Alternatively netizens are encouraged to login into Qidian using their other social media accounts, such as QQ, Weibo 微博, Alipay or Baidu 百度. Once successfully logged in[34], they officially become Qidian users and have the freedom to move around and decide what to do next. As explained earlier, Qidian users are welcome to choose non-literary related activities from tier 2 and literary related activities from tiers 2 and 3, although the tier sequence does not need to be followed as such.

When Qidian users decide to stay with literary related activities as readers, they are free to determine to what extent they will contribute towards prosumerism. Non-proactive users are likely to confine their activities to clicking webpages and consuming literary works, which makes them passive readers. However, Qidian's business model relies on offering a variety of social media features to provide its users with a range of interesting tasks similar to game-playing to encourage proactive participation. Proactive Qidian users who start out as readers will have several opportunities to go beyond the boundary of the traditional reader and start writing on Qidian themselves, becoming digital prosumers in this regard (see Figure 3).

There are several ways to participate proactively as readers. The original 'pay to read' feature which Qidian introduced in 2003 has been widely adopted by literary portal websites in China. Qidian has its own currency, known as Qidian *bi* 起點幣 (Qidian virtual currency, hereafter QVC), which currently stands at one QVC to one RMB cent. Readers need to use QVC to pay for a single 'charged' chapter or to pay for all of the 'charged' chapters at once if the chapter they intend to consume is a 'VIP chapter'. While using QVC to pay for reading content is a common practice for readers, Qidian has also designed various tasks which require QVC consumption to make sure that Qidian users spend their QVC to pay for more top-ups. There are five statuses which Qidian users can receive based on how many top-ups they make, i.e.: *putong yonghu* 普通用戶 (common user), *putong huiyuan* 普通會員 (common member), *gaoji huiyuan* 高級會員 (advanced member), *chuji VIP* 初級VIP (basic

33 http://www.qidian.com/Default.aspx (26 December 2015).

34 The phrase 'Qidian users' is used in a collective sense to cover the meaning of readers, authors and prosumers since there is no indication of how many Qidian users choose to be passive or active readers or authors. When Qidian users choose to become active readers, it is easy for them to start producing, for example by writing a book review or giving feedback. In this sense, readers become prosumers. Throughout the text, I primarily use the term 'Qidian users' but when I emphasize a specific aspect of Qidian users, I shall switch to more specific terms such as readers, authors or prosumers.

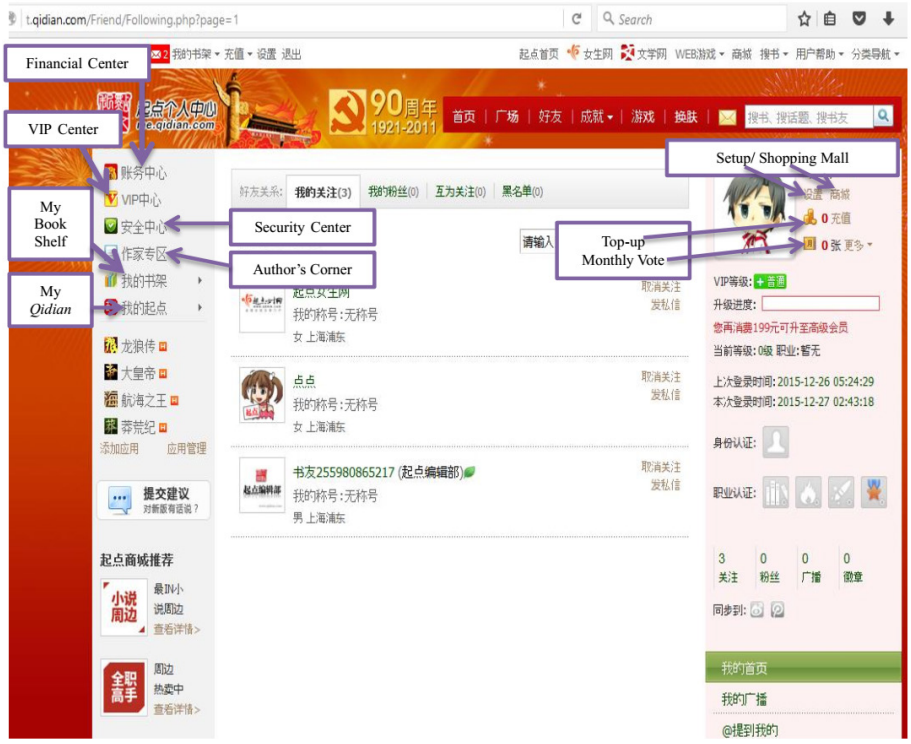

Figure 3: A Personalized Page for Valid, Registered Users on Qidian (Screenshot taken on 22 December 2015).

VIP) and *gaoji* VIP 高級 VIP (advanced VIP). Each status comes with different privileges and these fall into three general categories. The first is QVC-related, as the more advanced a user's status is, the less he or she will pay for consuming pieces of work. While members pay five RMB cents for every thousand characters they consume, advanced VIPs only pay three RMB cents. The second category is vote-related, as Qidian users are entitled to cast different types of vote for the works they prefer, based on their status. The third category is status-related, as only advanced VIP members can send internal emails directly to authors and the VIP status of members will be displayed when they log into Qidian for other Qidian users to take notice of.[35]

Topping-up is the fastest but not the only way to upgrade a user's status. Qidian users have the alternative route to gaining a sense of achievement and upgrading their status by earning

35 For more details, such as how much top-up is required to upgrade one's status, as well as the details of different status privilege, see *Bangzhu zhongxin* 幫助中心. http://wwwploy.qidian.com/HelpCenter/default.aspx?type=0&categoryid=42&parentid=21 (25 December 2015).

jingyan zhi 經驗值 (Experience value, hereafter EV). In order to earn EV, Qidian users have to carry out designated tasks from the nine major categories designed by Qidian, such as staying logged onto the system for a specific number of hours each time; tipping authors for a nicely-written chapter or users for a well-composed book review; paying to subscribe to five VIP chapters[36], or becoming active fans of a particular piece of work by writing feedback.[37] This value-earning system is very similar to game-playing in the sense that players are undertaking tasks, going through stages and collecting magic power and treasures. After accumulating a specific amount of EV, Qidian users receive their reward and can then choose a 'profession' ranging from Centaur Warrior or Werewolf, to Archangel or Seraph. Each profession has its fantasy attributes. The whole experience is much like adopting an avatar, carrying out different tasks and receiving rewards in a role-playing game.

By coming up with numerous tasks to lure Qidian users into spending more QVC, topping up with more real currency[38] while earning more EV, Qidian outsources many of the editorial tasks to readers for easy management, presumably because there is not enough manpower to oversee more than one million pieces of work online, but also to enable reader participation. Encouraging readers to move from a passive position and adopt a proactive attitude is beneficial to both Qidian and its readers. Qidian can leave readers to decide which pieces of work are popular, and readers are thus more engaged with Qidian and with the works they support because they have a greater chance to participate in the production of the works. This becomes a win-win situation for both Qidian and its readers.

Readers as Prosumers

Editors in a commercial publishing company traditionally have to review the manuscripts submitted to them and decide whether or not to publish them. Once a piece of work is accepted for publication, editors need to oversee the progress and ensure the quality of the work. The publishing company meanwhile oversees marketing-related issues in order to promote the published work for commercial profit. Profit rises in relation to the number of copies purchased. Qidian has not followed this traditional route, and has instead designed various interactive functions to ensure outsourcing the main editorial or marketing workloads to its

36 VIP chapters refer to those chapters which come with a reading fee, and it is the authors who decide from which chapter onwards they will begin to charge their readers. This notion will be further elucidated in the section on authors.

37 The Experience Value system is rather complex. For further details see *jingyanzhi he zhiye* 經驗值和職業. http://wwwploy.qidian.com/HelpCenter/default.aspx?type=0&categoryid=114&parentid=20 (25 December 2015).

38 Qidian not only accepts bankcards and credit cards issued in China and Taiwan but it also accepts Paypal, which suggests that any currency may be used and that users are not geographically confined to the Greater Chinese area.

Figure 4: Qidian Users' View of a Chosen Chapter (Screenshot taken on 22 December 2015).

readers. Readers not only consume literary works but also contribute directly, and in different ways, to the making of a literary product[39], thus becoming prosumers.

Figure 4 exemplifies how Qidian empowers its readers. When consuming a chapter, readers can tip authors for a well-written chapter, vote for the piece of work that they like best, and provide specific feedback and comments on that work. Nevertheless this remains a simplistic view of the readers' empowerment, and further examination reveals three individual, complicated systems behind each of the three tasks shown above in Figure 4. These three systems, when further analyzed, can be summarized as follows.

First, Qidian encourages readers to offer direct financial resources to authors and to other readers as well. As mentioned above, Qidian users spend their top-up credits to tip authors for doing a good job, and they can also tip other readers if they publish good book reviews or feedback. This design not only motivates authors to produce a chapter which readers will like but also partially relieves Qidian of any financial obligations to authors. The size of tips

39 Qidian editors still determine whether a piece of work is initially approved for release to the portal website. Afterwards other Qidian users select the upcoming chapters of the piece of work for their popularity and continuity, unless censorship-related issues arise. The next section on authors will provide more elucidation on this aspect.

seems to start from 10 QVC, but for VIP members it is suggested that tips start from 100 QVC and rise to as much as they wish. In addition to tipping authors, Qidian users also have the option to join a crowdfunding opportunity offered by Qidian to directly sponsor authors by paying in RMB or QVC to help them make their dreams come true. For instance authors might want to have their works converted into another format such as manga, or published in book format, or adapted into micro movies for streaming on video-sharing platforms such as Tudou 土豆 or Youku 優酷, or maybe TV dramas or even big budget commercial films. Qidian provides this opportunity by inviting its users to take part in the franchising. For each crowdfunding project which is implemented, Qidian crowdfunders will receive a specific proportion of the profits; otherwise their investment will be returned. Qidian strategically transfers some financial resource responsibility to its users, thereby enabling them to become more involved in the making of a literary end-product.

Second, readers decide which pieces of work will be popular through a whole set of complicated but rewarding voting systems. Here readers and authors share common ground, directly engaging with each other to contribute to the making of bestsellers. Some voting systems request readers to spend QVC, encouraging the consumption of that currency, others involve contributions from both readers and authors. In the case of consuming a chapter as shown in Figure 4, the voting option is a 'monthly vote' which VIP members can cast as long as their monthly QVC consumption (e.g. subscribing to works of fiction, tipping authors) has reached a certain level. For instance, if a VIP member's tip for a specific piece of work amounts to 10,000 QVC, that member will be entitled to one monthly vote for the work. Winning authors will receive extra income as a reward. However, there are other types of innovative votes which Qidian users can cast. One of these, called a 'renewal vote', is designed for VIP members. When VIP members cast a renewal vote, it means that they expect the following chapter of their favoured work to come out as soon as possible. Not only can VIPs request that a chapter come out during a designated time period, they can also stipulate how many characters it should contain. Every time a renewal of 3,000 characters is requested, VIPs have to cast a renewal vote which costs 100 QVC. They can request up to 12,000 characters renewal. If authors are able to fulfil this request within the following 24 hours, they receive the QVC as a reward; otherwise, should the request remain unfulfilled within the time frame specified, the QVC will revert back to the VIP members.[40]

Third, apart from different voting systems, readers have access to various other functions through which to make their voices heard. Interaction with other Qidian users and with authors is one feature which Qidian emphasizes and is constantly seeking to improve. As seen in Figure 3, Qidian users are welcome to leave feedback and comment on a chapter. After clicking on 'Offer feedback and comments', readers will be redirected to a page at forum.qidian.com which hosts all the feedback and comments from other Qidian users.

40 *Gengxinpiao xitong* 更新票系統. http://wwwploy.qidian.com/HelpCenter/default.aspx?type=0&categoryid=47&parentid=21 (25 December 2015).

Every work and every chapter has a designated space on the forum so that when comments are made the author of the work or the new chapter, as well as other Qidian users, can see them almost immediately.[41] To enhance the current forum system, Qidian is in the process of setting up *shuping* 2.0 書評 2.0 (book review 2.0).[42] Book review 2.0 aims to encourage more high-quality book reviews from Qidian users to give positive, constructive feedback to authors. Each book has its designated virtual board to host reviews, and Qidian users can apply to become a board master or deputy master monitoring review messages and ensuring that users follow board regulations. In this way, Qidian gives its users the opportunity to be producers through writing, while sharing some editorial tasks such as feedback and comments.

Enabled Authors: Participation and Production

To put it briefly, being a reader has become a complicated job. On the other hand, however, being an author on Qidian has become much easier compared with the traditional route of book publication, beginning with finding a literary agent, or with self-publication via Amazon, when a whole work has to be finished before it can be published. Qidian strongly promotes the notion that 'Any reader can write'[43] to encourage more Qidian users to become authors. Usually authors on Qidian start as readers, then take a step towards authorship while retaining their other role as readers consuming literary work. Digital prosumption enables this easily, thus turning readers into prosumers. Whether Qidian users are content to be merely readers or intend to try their hand at writing literary works, the boundary between readers and authors has become blurred. It has become unprecedentedly easy to switch between the two roles on Qidian thanks to various interactive social media features which mean that readers can participate more proactively. One way of doing this is by writing feedback and comments, thereby making readers writers.

Should Qidian users decide to take up authorship, they can follow a simple flowchart on the Qidian homepage as follows: *shenqing zuozhe* 申請作者 (applying to become authors), *fabiao zuopin* 發表作品 (publishing one's original work), *shenqing qianyue* 申請簽約 (proposing and agreeing to sign a contract with Qidian), *huode gaochou* 獲得稿酬 (being

41 Qidian used to have a *pingba* page at pingba.qidian.com to host Qidian users' feedback and comments. Now this function seems to have been disabled.

42 *Shupingqu erdianling xinban* 書評區2.0新版. http://wwwploy.qidian.com/HelpCenter/default.aspx?type=0&categoryid=142&parentid=59 (25 December 2015). As of 1 January, 2016 this function does not seem to have been entirely set up for use.

43 Qidian editors mentioned on this page that '*bushi suoyouren dou nenggou chengwei wangluo xieshou, dan suoyou de duzhe, jiben dou keyi chengwei wangluo xieshou* 不是所有人,都能夠成為網絡寫手,但所有的讀者,基本都可以成為網絡寫手'. Sanjiang Xiaozhen 三江小陣: *Wangluo yuanchuang wenxue xiezuo zhinan* 網絡原創文學寫作指南. 21 May 2013. http://wwwploy.qidian.com/ploy/20130521/default.aspx (26 December 2015). Interestingly, the fact that Qidian refers to authors as 'writing hands' suggests that quantity matters to them more than quality.

rewarded with author's fees and royalties).[44] At each step Qidian users can click on a hyperlink to obtain more details. Alternatively, users can visit the personalized page at the option '*zuojia zhuanqu* 作家專區' (author's corner) for more information about acquiring authorship (see Figure 3). Generally speaking, the first two stages of becoming authors and publishing original work are much easier than signing contracts and receiving payment or other forms of reward for writing.

Qidian users who are interested in becoming authors, known as *xieshou* 寫手 (literaly, writing hands), need to activate an author's account with Qidian and wait for an author's column to be set up. Once the setup is completed, a user needs to demonstrate some writing skills by submitting three chapters or 3,000 characters to the column and to wait for Qidian editors to review their work. Censorship applies to what is written, and any works reflecting, implicating or mocking politics, containing obscene description or violating any state regulation will not pass the review process. If the submitted work is accepted, the Qidian users will start on the journey to authorship. To help the new writing hands in their efforts, Qidian has put up a number of detailed guidelines in the Author's Corner to advise them on how to produce a piece of popular work efficiently and how to manage their column by taking advantage of direct interaction with readers, who play an unprecedentedly influential role in helping improve the authors' writing and even giving authors direct suggestions about what to write next if they suffer from writer's block. These instant interactive features on Qidian 'form a solid bond in cyberspace' between authors and readers.[45]

The threshold for authors on Qidian is relatively low, and authors can exercise some autonomy in deciding to which genre their works should belong, what story to write, how often the piece of work is to be renewed[46], and even in designing the cover image of their work. Nevertheless, becoming authors and having their work published on Qidian does not necessarily translate immediately into financial returns. It is true that there are authors who started their writing journeys with Qidian as part-time amateur writers and have now become

44 http://www.qidian.com/Default.aspx (26 December 2015).

45 Yipeng Shen: Netizens, Counter-Memories, and Internet Literature. In: *Public Discourses of Contemporary China: The Narration of the Nation in Popular Literatures, Film, and Television*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2015, p. 139.

46 Here, the term 'autonomy' is used only in a relative sense. Authors do have the right to decide which genre they will take on and how they intend to unfold their stories. However the ubiquitous state censorship works effortlessly, arguably through Qidian editors, to make sure that every work published on Qidian conforms to state censorship rules. Qidian specifies that works violating those rules will be deleted immediately. For instance, Tiaowu 跳舞, a commercially successful writer on Qidian, had an entire work of fiction of one million characters removed without prior warning because he was writing about a lesbian couple and also because the religious element was too pronounced for the state censors' taste. Patrick Howell O'Neill: Popular Chinese Online-Fiction Authors See Entire Novels Deleted by Censors. *The Daily Dot*. 19 April 2015. http://www.dailydot.com/politics/chinese-online-fiction-censorship (29 December 2015).

multi-millionaires as full-time professional authors[47], but this is understandably difficult to achieve. So far, Qidian has divided authors into three tiers: *gongzhong zuozhe* 公眾作者 (public authors), *qianyue zuozhe* 簽約作者 (contracted authors) and *shangjia zuozhe* 上架作者 (book-on-the-shelves authors). There is a barrier between tier 1 and the others. The barrier will be explained next.

When authors have their columns activated and their work published, they are categorized as 'public authors'. At this stage, any chapter of a work can be consumed for free by Qidian users. Sporadic tips from generous readers are the only income that authors receive and authors do not have full support, such as marketing, from Qidian to promote their works. For public authors, the only way to be recognized is to continue writing in order to become contracted authors someday. An author can apply to become a contracted author, in which case Qidian editors will review the request based on the quality of the work provided. Alternatively, Qidian editors, who monitor the popularity and arguably the content in order to censor it, may contact authors whose work shows potential. Usually, when a piece of work has reached a character count of 250,000 to 300,000 and popularity has built up among readers, Qidian editors will suggest that a contract is signed. Yet the fact of signing a contract is not translated into stable financial resources—authors at this stage still rely on tips from generous readers. Once a contract is signed, Qidian will promote the work on the portal and recommend it. Having one's work recommended is crucial to moving towards the next tier of becoming book-on-the-shelf authors, because the more recommendations a piece of work receives and the more frequently it is collected onto readers' personal virtual bookshelves, the more likely it is to be displayed on Qidian's virtual shelves. This helps to elevate an author's status to the next tier. Once authors successfully move into tier three and become book-on-the-shelf authors, they will have a steadier income. These authors will be awarded VIP status and will have the right to decide from which chapter onwards their work will require 'VIP' access, which comes with a reading fee. Readers can choose to subscribe to all of the VIP chapters or pay per chapter. At this stage, a share of the reading fee is paid to Qidian. Currently the fee is split, with 70 per cent going to the author and 30 per cent to Qidian, which is roughly equivalent to an income of 2.1 cents per thousand characters for authors.[48] Consequently, the more subscriptions there are the higher the income authors will earn. However, only 15–20 per cent of the contracted authors have successfully made it to that stage after writing works with character counts of over a million, or even several million.[49] This three-tiered scheme means that most authors publish for free.

47 In Sina Weibo's list of the 'ten most commercially successful Internet fiction writers in 2015', the top three authors started writing with Qidian as amateurs and have now become multi-millionaires as professional writers. They are Tangjia Sanshao 唐家三少 (annual income RMB 110 million); Tiancan Tudou 天蠶土豆 (annual income RMB 46 million); and Candong 殘東 (annual income RMB 38 million). See http://s.weibo.com/weibo/2015第十届中国作家榜, May 2016).

48 Hockx, *Internet Literature in China*, p. 110.

49 Sanjiang Xiaozhen, *Wangluo yuanchuan wenxue xiezuo zhinan*.

Claiming to help more authors move towards stardom on Qidian and to be responding to most authors' complaints about the low and unstable remuneration they receive for all their hard labour, Qidian launched an 'income protection' scheme in June 2015, which only applies to VIP authors.[50] According to Qidian's terms and conditions, those VIP authors who consistently produce 4,000 characters per day or alternatively 180,000 characters per month, but still earn a monthly income of less than RMB 1,500, can apply to be included in the income protection scheme and receive 1,500 RMB per month for up to four months for one single piece of work.[51] Part of the new scheme is also for Qidian to begin an online MOOC course entitled Qidian Writing Academy to familiarize authors with formulas for creating popular pieces of fiction[52], arguably turning Qidian into a factory of massive prosumption of popular literature predominantly in the form of fiction. While most authors are publishing for free, many new Qidian users are still joining this large writing pool, hoping that one day their work will turn into actual financial resources, and they may even be able to sell the rights and see their writing converted into other media formats which bring them celebrity.

The Creation of Ranking Lists for Popular Works

Popularity is always an important factor in popular literature production and consumption. To find out which book is a bestseller, various agents such as a publishing house or bookstore are traditionally involved in producing a bestseller list. On Qidian, however, both authors and readers co-create popularity rankings via multiple interactive functions. Qidian applies and further enhances the notion of popularity by designing a number of rankings to measure the extent to which a piece of work is genuinely popular through the various instant, interactive social media functions and Qidian readers and authors enjoy autonomy on an unprecedented level. Qidian uses its platform to enable readers and authors to participate in the making of rankings in order to detect which genres and which pieces of work appeal more to netizens, and also gives authors a guide as to which genre to choose and what they should write to gain popularity. The design of various popularity rankings reflects a crucial

50 *Xingjihua* 星計劃. http://wwwploy.qidian.com/ploy/20150520qdsp/czbz.htm (1 January 2016). Qidian has not clarified how much a writer will receive. But on this income protection scheme Qidian indicates that authors' income is no longer '1 cent per thousand characters'. It could be that Qidian has several different income protection schemes and differences between the various types of contract it signs with authors might explain the discrepancy between the 2.1 cents per thousand characters mentioned previously in the text and the 1 cent per thousand characters.

51 There are several terms and conditions on this page, for more details see *Xingjihua*.

52 The MOOC course has not officially started yet. It is a work-in-progress up at the time of writing. http://wwwploy.qidian.com/ploy/20150520qdsp/zjwx.htm#textID (1 January 2016).

principle which Qidian emphasizes in the slogan '*Duzhe shi women de shangdi* 讀者是我們的上帝'(Readers are our god).[53]

There are five main categories[54] of popularity rankings (see Figure 5): (1) *xiaoshuo paihangbang* 小說排行榜 (works of fiction rankings); (2) *zuozhe paihangbang* 作者排行榜 (author rankings); (3) *shequ bangdan* 社區榜單 (community rankings); (4) *nüshengwang xiaoshuo paihangbang* 女生網小說排行榜 (Qidian Women's Net rankings); and (5) *qita xiaoshuo paihangbang* 其他小說排行榜 (rankings for other literary genres). Each category has its particular focus. For instance, works of fiction rankings are an indication of which works of fiction are the most popular of all the works published on Qidian Chinese Net, whereas Qidian Women's Net rankings concentrate solely on romance narratives. Author rankings reveal which authors attract the most attention at different tiers. Community rankings cover diverse reader-activity-oriented topics such as a tipping ranking to see who tips the most, a renewal-vote ranking to see which author renews the most based on readers' requests, a book review ranking to see who publishes feedback regularly and of the highest quality, and a feedback ranking to see which piece of work receives the most feedback. Under the rankings for other literary genres one can find less consumed genres such as manga. During the process of co-creating the popularity rankings, authors and readers reciprocate on a fully facilitated platform—authors produce what readers prefer, and readers articulate or even dictate what they want to consume. The following section will discuss the most frequently visited ranking category—the 'works of fiction rankings'—to examine it as an example of how rankings are created.

The 'works of fiction rankings' category contains several sub-categories (see Figure 5). The rankings, which display the popularity of literary works, are divided into the following sub-categories based on three sets of variables: (1) voting methods (i.e. *dianji* 點擊, or hits; *tuijian* 推薦, or recommendations; and *shoucang* 收藏, or collection); (2) targeted groups of users (*shuyou* 書友, or 'book friends', members and VIPs)[55]; and (3) time interval, (i.e. whether reading content appears cumulatively, monthly, or weekly). All of the variables are combined with one another to generate more popularity charts, for instance, monthly VIP ranking based on collection, or cumulative member ranking based on hits. This allows readers to find out which work is the most popular on the basis of what their own category of choice.

53 Sanjiang Xiaozhen, *Wangluo yuanchuan wenxue xiezuo zhinan*.

54 The rankings and the main categories are located at http://top.qidian.com/Default.aspx (1 January 2016).

55 As explained previously, Qidian's system is inconsistent in some respects, one of these being the divisions of membership. The Qidian help centre at http://wwwploy.qidian.com/HelpCenter/default.aspx?type=0&categoryid=42&parentid=21 (2 January 2016) shows that it divides membership into five categories without using the term 'Book Friend' to refer to any of the groups. Neither does Qidian seem to provide any information about which membership groups fall into the categories of Book Friend and of Members. The discussion of rankings associated with the Book Friend or Member categories is based on my own experience on Qidian as a registered reader.

The same ranking-generation principles are applied to all fourteen of the main genres of fiction on Qidian Chinese Net, creating even more specific popularity rankings (see Figure 1).

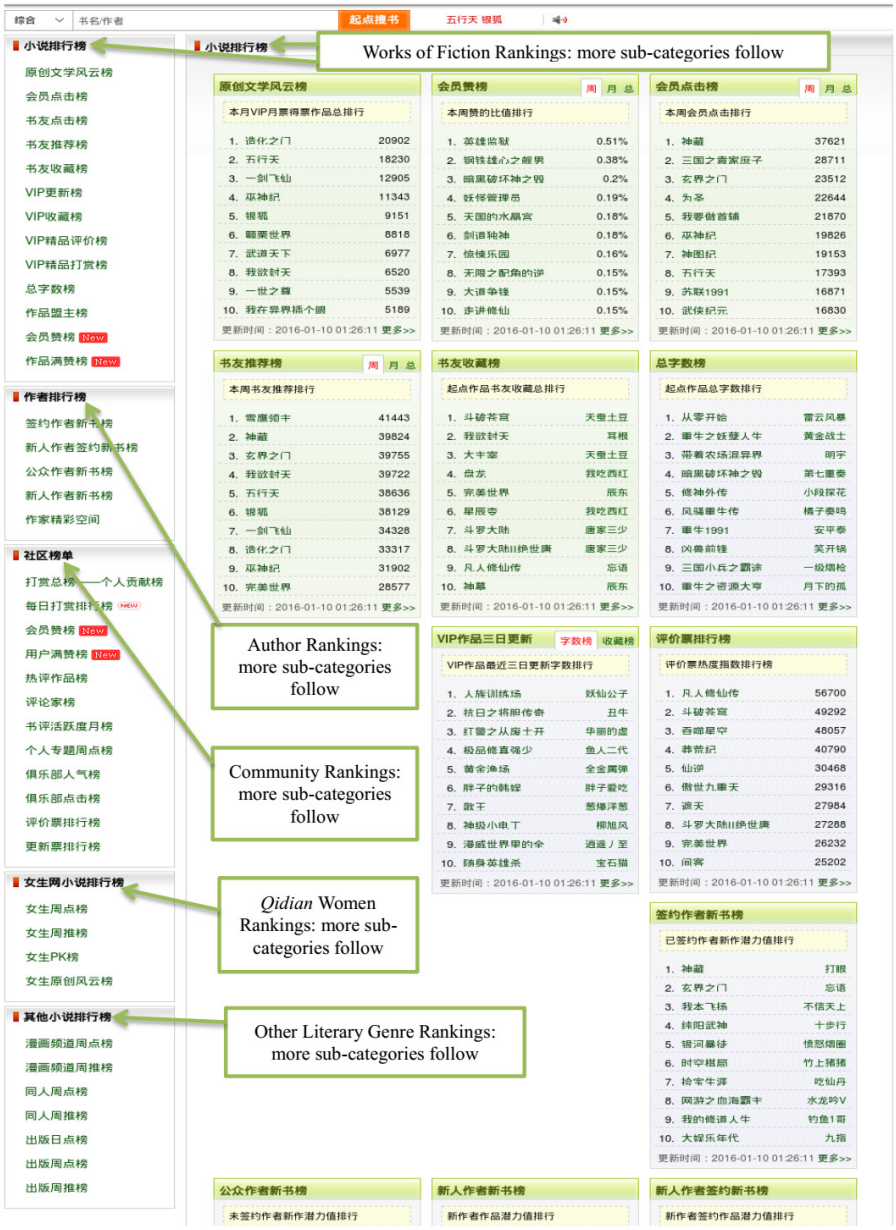

Figure 5: Rankings (Screenshot taken on 1 January 2016).

Figure 6: The 'Cover Page' of a Work of Fiction (Screenshot taken on 1 January 2016).

Regardless of how Qidian users locate a piece of work (search engine, database search or ranking systems), they will be redirected to a 'cover' webpage once they click on the title of a specific work (see Figure 6). This is the starting point for the different methods of vote-calculation to take effect. This cover section fulfils a similar function to the book-jacket of a literary work, serving to provide Qidian users with more details of a work. An illustration is placed at the top left corner of the webpage (authors are welcome to design the cover themselves, as explained previously) and to the right of the illustration appears the synopsis. Immediately beneath the illustration is a set of voting options. From top to bottom, the menu is arranged as follows: *dianji yuedu* 點擊閱讀 (click here to begin reading: this records the number of hits a piece of work receives); *jiaru shujia* 加入書架 (add to my bookshelf: this shows how often a piece of work is collected or documented), *tou tuijianpiao* 投推薦票 (vote to recommend: this calculates how frequently a piece of work is recommended); *xiazai yuedu* 下載閱讀 (download to read: readers can download the work to their digital devices); *zeng-song zhangjie* 贈送章節 (bonus chapters: when a piece of work offers this option it means it has VIP chapters) and *dashang zuopin* 打賞作品 (tipping authors for their work: readers can

send monetary signs of appreciation to authors). The first three options are clearly designed to trace reading activities in order to numerically determine the popularity of any work.

The three important variables used by Qidian to generate rankings can be interpreted as a sequence of readers' responses. As a Qidian user randomly clicks on one chapter of a work in order to read a sample of it, the hit will be recorded on the Qidian server and will be counted towards the cumulative numerical outcome. Once their interest has been aroused, Qidian users who are attracted to the work will likely collect the work. Eventually, enthusiastic Qidian users will recommend it to others. As explained previously in the section on authors, having one's work recommended is crucial to authors if they want to move from 'contracted author' status to 'book-on-the-shelf author' status. This reflects a new, more direct relationship between authors and readers to the point where the vertical relationship between authors and readers of the past has become a more horizontal relationship in which authors and readers are on a par, and the traditional intermediary agents appear to have lost their significance. In this horizontal relationship, authors and readers can switch roles easily due to the multi-interactive functions facilitated by the digital platform, thus contributing to digital prosumption.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined Qidian's business model in terms of various social media and interactive functions devised on Qidian's portal website to empower readers, to enable authors and to facilitate digital prosumption to the point where the traditional boundary between readers and authors is rapidly vanishing. Qidian's innovative commercial model has been widely replicated. Other frequently-visited literary portal websites which carry original literary works in China such as Tencent wenxue 騰訊文學 (Tencent literature) [56] , K17 xiaoshuo wang K17小說網 (K17 fiction net)[57], Tiexue dushu 鐵血讀書 (Iron and blood reading)[58], Jinjiang wenxue cheng 晉江文學城 (Jinjiang literature city)[59], Xiaoshuo yuedu wang, Hongxiu tianxiang, Rongshuxia and many other websites have all introduced features similar to those commonly found on Qidian. Readers are empowered by different interactive functions to communicate with and demand from authors what they want. To consume what they prefer, readers are willing to pay to read and to reward authors financially through various schemes. In addition, portal websites enable those wishing to become authors. Publishing for free, however, remains the necessary step before authors gain sufficient popularity and

56 Official webpage: book.qq.com (3 January 2016). It has two major channels: chuangshi.qq.com for male-oriented works of fiction and yunqi.qq.com for female-oriented romance narratives.

57 Official webpage: www.k17.com (3 January 2016). This too has a male-oriented channel and a female-oriented one.

58 Official webpage: book.tiexue.net (3 January 2016). This portal website brings together mainly military and historical fiction.

59 Official webpage: www.jjwxc.net (4 January 2016). This is a female-oriented website for romance narratives.

recognition among readers to earn a steady income. To establish and determine what is popular, readers and authors, by making different rankings, collaborate directly with each other to define popularity on a given digital platform. Finally, the boundary between authors and readers has been diminished through various interactive features on the digital platform, as authors and readers can change roles, consuming and producing at the same time, to achieve digital prosumption. In this regard, the rise of digital publication has re-configured not only the landscape of popular literature in China but also the history of books. While digital publication has not altogether replaced traditional book publication, it undeniably offers an alternative model for books in China today.

13
Disruptive Innovation in the Chinese Ebook Industry

Xiang Ren

Is digital publishing leading to a paradigm shift or only replicating the print publishing systems in digital garb? This appears to be a key concern of the Chinese publishing industry in the Internet age. In the age of ebooks, dynamics such as self-publishing, digital distribution, and the Internet economy have the potential to challenge the established publishing models, regulations, and book cultures through disruptive innovation such as disintermediating and reintermediating publishing communication, empowering authors and readers in connected and distributed ways, and capitalising on content resources with new channels and models. Whilst digital publishing has tremendous disruptive potential, there is still uncertainty about its future due to strong contextual factors in China such as government control, the monopoly of state-owned publishers, the prevalence of print reading habits, and a traditional book culture as opposed to the open, connected, and distributed Internet culture.

In this chapter, I will review disruptive innovation in the ebook industry and their cultural impacts in both the production and consumption sides of publishing in China. I will explore the complex interplay between disruptive innovation and contextual factors through examining three case studies in the ebook field: Qidian (Qidian zhongwen wang 起点中文网; Starting point) the literary self-publishing site,[1] China Mobile Reading Base (Zhongguo yidong yuedu jidi 中国移动阅读基地), the ebook distributor for mobile phone reading, and Duokan (Duokan yuedu 多看阅读), an ebook startup with user-oriented and user-driven innovation. They are conducting ebook business differently from traditional publishers as well as from many ebook vendors. Their innovative praxis and challenges could be viewed as a snapshot of the digital transformations occurring in the Chinese publishing system, which reflect the key contextual factors that shape the innovators there.

Apart from the focus of the industry, I will also discuss the cultural impacts of the industrial changes, particularly on the consumption of ebook content. Disruptive innovation has created new reading markets in China, and this has also changed the demographics of reading publics, especially with the rise of the *diaosi* 屌丝. One could identify the *diaosi* population with Chinese millennials, but *diaosi* is usually applied particularly to young Chinese who have low levels of income, education, and/or literacy. These young people adopt the term, which refers to 'self-aware and self-deprecating losers', as a cultural identity, thus expressing their dissatisfaction over 'getting left behind in capitalist China' and using the online public sphere

1 On Qidian see also Chapters 11 and 12.

to playfully protest against social inequality.[2] Their activism and cultural resistance coexist with vulnerability to digital consumerism, cyber nationalism, and political propaganda. All of these elements influence ebook consumption and cultures. With an awareness of cultural complexity and chaos in which an 'anarchic cultural marketplace'[3] is emerging alongside the complex interactions between different cultural groups[4], this paper focuses on the question to what extent and in what aspects has the growth of disruptive initiatives and emergent reading publics led to a digital publishing culture that is different from the print counterparts. As a result of digital disruption, I will also explore the role of disruptive ebook innovation in digital enlightenment in China's complex Internet system and social transitions.

Background

Disruptive Innovation

Theories on disruptive innovation are widely used today in studying digital transformations. Harvard Business School Professor Clayton M. Christensen coined this concept, in contrast to 'sustaining' innovation.[5] 'Disruptive innovation' refers to innovations that create new markets and value networks and eventually disrupt the existing system, displacing earlier models. Christensen uses the concept to explain why successful companies failed to adopt new technologies and business models and therefore lost ground to disruptive innovators. Despite its popularity as a theory of change, scholars and practitioners tend to question disruptive innovation for its simplification of the role of enterprises in digital transformation as either disrupting or being disrupted. It is sometimes difficult to employ the concept of disruptive innovation when explaining disruptive changes in complex social and economic systems.[6]

Book History studies normally embrace technological determinism when assessing the transformation of publishing, in light of the revolutionary role of printing technologies in the Gutenberg age and digital technologies today. Social readiness, cultural shifts, and economic and political imperatives appear to drive the critiques of technological determinism

2 Marcella Szablewicz: The 'Losers' of China's Internet: Memes as 'Structures of Feeling' for Disillusioned Young Netizens. *China Information* 28:2 (2014), pp. 259-75; see also Michelle FlorCruz: China's 'Diaosi': Growing 'Loser' Population Sheds Light on Chinese Youth. *International Business Times*, 12 April 2014. http://www.ibtimes.com/chinas-diaosi-growing-loser-population-sheds-light-chinese-youth-1734575 (26 April 2016).

3 Brian McNair: *Cultural Chaos: Journalism and Power in a Globalised World*. London and New York: Routledge 2006.

4 John Hartley/Jason Potts: *Cultural Science: A Natural History of Stories, Demes, Knowledge and Innovation.* London: Bloomsbury Academic 2014.

5 Clayton M Christensen: *The Innovator's Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail.* Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press 1997.

6 Jill Lepore: The Disruption Machine. *The New Yorker*, 23 June 2014. http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/06/23/the-disruption-machine (5 June 2016).

in explaining publishing transformations.[7] This debate echoes the concerns over applying disruptive innovation in complex systems.

Nevertheless, the concept of disruptive innovation is important to understand the changes in the Chinese publishing industry in the digital age. Disruptive innovation is also a useful lens to analyse the complex interplay between disruptive technologies and the Chinese publishing contexts. Therefore, the scope of disruptive technologies in this chapter goes beyond business or physical technologies, and includes social technologies, too. Since the Cultural Revolution, significant changes and reforms have happened in the Chinese publishing industry, particularly marketisation, privatisation, and digitisation based on disruptive physical and social technologies. Disruption thus transcends competition between enterprises, relating rather to the evolutionary competition between the new and old systems, cultures, and paradigms.

The Chinese ebook Industry: A Digital 'Special Zone'

China's book publishing industry has been both rapidly evolving and growing since the beginning of the reform era (i.e. since 1979). New disruptive innovators, including the reformers within state-owned publishers, private publishers, and digital initiatives have been continuously creating and exploring new markets through new types of content and radical business innovations. These innovations are challenging and disrupting the established models, administration, power structure, and publishing culture. When these new models are widely employed and emergent practices become mainstream, the Chinese publishing system at large evolves.

In the print age, private publishers have been a major driver of disruptive innovation. The government and state-owned publishers dubbed them 'the second channel' in the 1980s and 1990s, which not only means a book distribution channel rather than a publishing or editing entity, but also one which is supplementary to the state-owned counterpart. For private publishers, doing business in such a heavily regulated industry and competing with dominant state-owned publishers was like swimming with hands and feet tied. However, private publishers are developing and growing rapidly due to their more flexible and market-driven operations and because they are offering entertaining and practical content to a mass readership. The business of private publishers has gradually expanded into the publishing and editing fields since the 1990s. The disruptive innovation led by private publishers has changed the old book publishing business, which was based on academic and professional publication, 'pure' (i.e. 'high') literature, propaganda, and textbooks, and created a vast consumer market for book publishing in China. Today, the private sector dominates mass market trade publishing as a result of market-oriented disruptive innovation.

Digital publishing, particularly ebooks, delivers the next generation of disruptive technologies in China's book publishing industry, based on new communicative and commercial

7 Joan Judge: *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition* (book review). *East Asian Publishing and Society* 1:1 (2011), pp. 93-99.

models and the vast emerging digital reading market. Digital reading is booming, especially in the mobile Internet age. The total revenues generated from digital content business including ebooks, e-magazines, and e-newspapers in 2015 was RMB 7.45 billion (roughly USD 1.12 billion).[8] Kozlowski and Greenfield estimate that the Chinese ebook market is two-thirds the size of the US market, which remains the world's largest.[9] There are significant opportunities for digital publishing business and possibilities for digital disruption affecting traditional book publishing.

Further, digital publishing and ebook businesses enjoy a regulatory 'special zone'. China still maintains very tight governmental control and censorship over book publishing and this is extending from print to digital. For example, the Chinese government issues licences for ebook businesses and launches campaigns like 'Cleaning the Internet' to regulate Internet content, including ebooks.[10] However, the Chinese government is also ambitious in establishing leadership in digital innovations and specifically building a sustainable publishing system through marketisation and digitisation together.[11] As a result, the government allows a certain level of deregulation in digital publishing, which gives rise to a practical 'special zone' for disruptive innovation. Moreover, government regulation and censorship usually lag behind technological developments and digital innovations in the Internet age. This further enhances the advantages of digital disruptors over traditional publishing in terms of regulations and censorship.

Despite the opportunities and advantages, the Chinese ebook industry offers both uncertainty and challenges, particularly the lack of high quality content, the generally low willingness and purchase power of readers, and rampant copyright infringement. As traditional publishers, including private ones who own most of the book content copyrights, hold conservative attitudes towards ebook business, they are reluctant to license the latest and most bestselling content to ebook vendors. This reduces the overall attraction of ebooks to readers. Despite a vast digital reading population, Chinese readers spent on average only USD 4.30 on ebooks in 2014, while this figure was USD 46 in the United States, USD 84.4 in the UK

8 Yushan Wei 魏玉山: 2015–2016 Zhongguo shuzi chuban chanye niandu baogao 2015–2016中国数字出版产业年度报告. *Guangming Online,* 21 July 2016. http://reader.gmw.cn/2016-07/21/content_21057763.htm (13 October 2016).

9 Michael Kozlowski/Jeremy Greenfield: iTunes for Android, Apple ebook Sales Rising in the US and International Publishing Markets. *E-Reader Radio*, 24 March 2014. http://goodereader.com/blog/electronic-readers/podcast-itunes-for-android-apple-ebook-sales-rising-in-the-us-and-international-publishing-markets (15 January 2016).

10 John Zorabedian: China Vows to 'Clean the Internet' in Cybercrime Crackdown, 15,000 Arrested. *Naked Security*, 20 August 2015. https://nakedsecurity.sophos.com/2015/08/20/china-vows-to-clean-the-internet-in-cybercrime-crackdown-15000-arrested/ (26 April 2016).

11 Binjie Liu: Use of Digitization to Modernize China's Publishing Industry. *Publishing Research Quarterly* 24 (2008), pp. 40-47.

and USD 86.5 in Japan.[12] Digital piracy and copyright infringement are rampant in China's ebook industry. The estimated number of pirated ebook websites in 2014 was 14,000, generating about 8–10 times more revenue than the copyrighted ebook business.[13] These factors make the ebook business less attractive for traditional publishers than print publishing, where they can make higher and more stable profit margins while enjoying a monopolistic position.

While disruptive innovation has started in the emerging ebook market in China, it appears to have been too limited or too difficult for established publishers to experiment with. Startups and new entrants outside the traditional publishing domains have thus become leading players in the ebook industry. In order to deal with the challenges, they employ communicative and commercial models different from those that print publishers are familiar with, harnessing digital dynamics. With the growth in ebook markets, the disruptive innovators are able to threaten the business of print publishing. Traditional publishers today call these disruptors 'the wolves at the door'. In the following sections, I will introduce three case studies that represent different types of disruptive innovation in the production, distribution, and consumption of ebooks.

Three Case Studies of Disruptive Innovation in the ebook Industry

Qidian and Self-Publishing

Self-publishing is a disruptive technology for the intermediaries of publishers as well as for government censorship, given that everyone is potentially free to publish anything on the Internet. Represented by online literature, self-publishing has indeed led to disruptive changes, in particular the rise of new Internet intermediaries, 'freemium' business models, entertaining literary content, and population-wide creative writing.

Online literature was originally fan-generated fiction and self-expression of lovers of literature and first emerged in the country during the late 1990s. Genre fictions soon became the dominant format, along with a rapid shift of online creative writing from self-expression to money-making creative 'jobs'. Qidian was established in 2002 and acquired by Shanda Literature (*Shengda wenxue* 盛大文学) in 2008 and later by Yuewen Group (*Yuewen jituan* 阅文集团) in 2015. It is the most important platform in the Chinese industry of self-published online literature. Qidian invented a unique business model to capitalise on self-published content, combining freemium with micropayment, allowing readers to read a few free chapters and then pay to read the rest of the book on a chapter-by-chapter basis. This model enabled the financial sustainability of Chinese online literature in its early stages, particularly for

12 Matt Rosoff: Japanese Readers Spend the Most on Electronic Books. *Business Insider Australia*, 4 August 2015. http://www.donotlink.com/framed?756730 (15 January 2016).

13 Yang Yang 杨阳: Daoban zhifu bu zai bei moxu 盗版致富不再被默许. *Jingji guancha wang*, 25 April 2014. http://www.eeo.com.cn/2014/0525/261030.shtml (15 January 2016).

self-published content whose quality and value can vary greatly, and also in light of a copyright environment in which IP infringement and piracy are rampant and readers are unwilling to pay for content. Compared with the mainstream business models of ebooks, the Qidian model is radically innovative and has created a vast readership for online literature.

After Qidian was acquired by Shanda Literature, some new initiatives such as a VIP subscription that allows unlimited reading on the entire website gradually became popular. Since 2014, so-called 'big IP (Intellectual Property) strategies' have been on the rise. Such strategies monetise popular content by licensing copyright for film and TV adaptations, or by franchising, rather than by charging readers for accessing original fiction ebooks. 'Big IP' has become extremely popular in the industry, facilitated by the commercial success of films and TV dramas based on popular online literature such as *Hou gong:* 后宫·甄嬛传 (Empresses in the Palace, 2011), *Gui chui deng zhi xun long jue* 鬼吹灯之寻龙诀 (Mojin: the lost legend, 2015), *Langya bang* 琅琊榜 (Nirvana in fire, 2015) and 芈月传 *Miyue zhuan* (The legend of Miyue, 2015). The venture capital and Internet giants like Tencent and Alibaba also play an important role in integrating ebook business into bigger commercial ecosystems based on IP exploitation. Thanks to cross-subsidies[14], copyright owners sometimes even make fiction free to read in order to accumulate popularity and increase the value of their IPs. This is far different from traditional publishing business models that depend on selling physical books or digital copies directly to readers, as well as from the earlier Qidian model.[15]

These innovative business models led to the commercial success of online literature in China. In 2014, the online literature industry involves over two million authors and publishes a million words each day. There are 247 million readers, accounting for 44 per cent of China's Internet users[16] and the estimated market worth is RMB 4.63 billion (roughly USD 650 million).[17] In the age of mobile Internet, online literature is the third largest category of in-app purchases in China, accounting for 30.8 per cent, behind only games and social media.[18] Based on their huge commercial value and popularity, online platforms like Qidian have replaced traditional publishers and become the dominant intermediary of literary publishing. Unlike what happens in other publishing fields, where ebooks normally digitise already published print content, the information flow in literary publishing is reversed: once

14 Whereby the revenues generated through advertising, licensing, or franchising cross-subsidise the distribution of free or inexpensive content.

15 Xiang Ren: Creative Users, Social Networking, and New Models of Publishing. *Cultural Science* 7:1 (2014), pp. 58-67.

16 China Internet Network Information Center: Chinese Mobile Internet Research Report. Beijing: CNNIC 2014.

17 Songhui Song 宋嵩绘: Wangluo wenxue yi cheng ziben chong'er 网络文学已成资本宠儿. *Nandu wang*, 21 February 2014. http://news.nandu.com/html/201402/21/808004.html (5 January 2016).

18 China Internet Network Information Center: Chinese Mobile Internet Research Report. Beijing: CNNIC 2014.

the born digital online literature becomes popular, the print version will be published to further explore the market.

Apart from business innovations and disruptive changes in the literary publishing industry, the nature of self-publishing enables new types of content, which could disrupt the established paradigms of literary writing. Online literature, particularly born digital genre fictions, has become the dominant form of literary writing, for example fantasy, romance, thrillers, crime stories, ghost stories, and Chinese warrior fiction (*wuxia* 武侠). The Chinese online literature authors have also created some unique Chinese genres, in particular, grave robbers' stories (*daomu xiaoshuo* 盗墓小说), time travel romance (*chuanyue wenxue* 穿越文学), and alternate history (*jiakong lishi* 架空历史). All these are different from what was written during the 'print age' by professional authors, who were generally members of official authors' associations that are sponsored and supervised by the government. Although the critics, academics and mainstream media have criticised the quality, aesthetic value and ideologies of online literature, the entertaining content is highly attractive to the majority of Chinese readers who are tired of reading serious and propaganda literary content. We may conclude that the commercial success of Chinese online literature results from a systemic coincidence, i.e. the inability of the print publishing industry to service public reading demand for genre fictions and the dynamics of self-publishing based on millions of creative users.[19] The strict censorship of literary publishing that existed in the past thus stimulated a strong market demand for the online literature.

On the other hand, even for online literature, there is still a bottom line of politically sensitive content and pornography. Self-censorship has become the major mechanism to regulate content in online literature today, in addition to occasional government-led 'Cleaning the Internet' campaigns. Interestingly, self-censorship becomes even more effective in the 'big IP' context, as many authors hope to maximise commercial benefits through TV or film adaptations and thus accommodate to the more restrictive censorship standards of screen media in China. Some self-published authors even write 'main melody' (*zhu xuanlü* 主旋律) fictions serving propaganda purposes to increase the opportunities for TV or film adaptations. Compared with the digital disruption to the business models of print literary publishing, the innovations of self-published online literature are less disruptive to government censorship in terms of publishing content that would not normally be officially allowed or encouraged.

China Mobile Reading Base and Digital Distribution

In China, e-Commerce (Internet retailer) sites build and operate major ebook stores such as the Kindle ebook Store (in partnership with Chinese All, *Zhongwen zai xian* 中文在线), Chinese Dang Dang ebooks (*Dangdang dianzi shu* 当当电子书), and Chinese Jing Dong e-Reading (*Jingdong shuzi yuedu* 京东数字阅读). As part of their commercial ecosystems

19 Xiang Ren/Lucy Montgomery: Chinese Online Literature: Creative Consumers and Evolving Business Models. *Arts Marketing* 2:2 (2012), pp. 118-30.

of Internet retailing, these ebook stores transform existing purchasers of print books and other commodities into ebook consumers while at the same time attracting Internet traffic of consumers and generating profit through potential follow-up online shopping for commodities other than ebooks. This is an innovative redefinition of the value of ebooks in the e-commerce environment. However, with regard to the ebook business model itself, these ebook stores employ very traditional approaches, selling individual ebook 'copies' to readers as if they were printed books.

In comparison, the business models developed by the Chinese telecommunication corporations are more innovative. China had over 527 million active mobile Internet users by June 2014[20] and 53.67 per cent of Chinese mobile Internet users read all sorts of literature on mobile devices.[21] The revenues generated from mobile reading accounted for on average 60-70 per cent of Chinese publishers' ebook business in 2014.[22] This huge mobile reading market is dominated by three monopolist telecommunication corporations, China Mobile, China Tele, and China Union, which together acquired 70 per cent of the market share. China Mobile as the industry leader holds 49.1 per cent.[23]

China Mobile Reading Base was launched in May 2010. Based on its 750 million users, this initiative aimed to build new models of ebook distribution from the very beginning. China Mobile Reading Base employed an ebook subscription mode, similar to Kindle Unlimited by Amazon. This was not a genuine innovation at the time, but was disruptive to the established ebook business which depended on selling individual titles. The ebook subscriptions start at only RMB 3 yuan, roughly USD 0.5 per month, which is much cheaper than buying individual ebook titles. Moreover, it provides a seemingly super-value bundle for Chinese readers who are generally reluctant to pay for digital content, allowing them to make a single easy payment and enjoy full access to over 100,000 ebook titles. Furthermore, compared with other ebook stores, China Mobile Reading Base has a large number of popular online literature titles, making its subscription bundles attractive to users. It even attempted to import ebooks published in Hong Kong and Taiwan, in order to differentiate its ebook content from that of its competitors.

China Mobile Reading Base started its ebook business when the industry was pessimistic about the commercial viability and financial sustainability of ebooks. In 2010, the leading ebook store Fanshu (*Fanshu wang* 番薯网) only generated RMB 1.14 million (USD 175,

20 China Internet Network Information Center: Chinese Mobile Internet Research Report. Beijing: CNNIC 2014.

21 Enfodesk: 2013 Research Report on China's Mobile Reading Industry. Beijing: Enfodesk 2013.

22 Yewei Yuan 原业伟: Chuantong chuban jigou shuzi chuban shouru da pandian 传统出版机构数字出版收入大盘点. *Chuban shangwu zhoubao*, 13 November 2014. http://www.tiandiph.com/News_show.php?id=456. (13 July 2016).

23 Jing Li李婧: 'Shuzi chuban di yi gu' shangshi hou zenme zou '数字出版第一股'上市后怎么走. *Zhongguo wenhua bao*, 7 February 2015. http://epaper.ccdy.cn/html/2015-02/07/content_146846.htm (15 June 2015).

000) with losses of over RMB 20 million (USD 3.1 million) from selling individual ebook titles to readers.[24] However, China Mobile Reading Base generated a revenue of RMB 100 million (USD 17 million) in 2012. In 2014 they had over 130 million individual visitors per month and over 600 million daily visits.[25] This attracted over 240 publishers who licensed their ebooks to this platform.

This commercial success could be attributed to the combination of disruptive business innovation and industrial monopoly. Undeniably, the ebook subscription models have proved to be commercially viable and attractive to mobile phone readers. For ebook vendors, the subscription model also helps spread the risk of selling individual ebook titles through the economics of scale and scope. However, the monopoly situation of China Mobile plays a key role in the commercial success of such a disruptive ebook model. It directly benefits from China Mobile's hundreds of millions of users, who form a large scale readership base. More importantly, China Mobile pre-installs ebook reading apps in the smartphones they sell and provides bundles like Donggan Didai 动感地带[26] that combine ebook subscription with value-added information services or even monthly mobile phone charges. Through monopoly-backed disruptive innovation, the Chinese telecommunication corporations have created a growing new ebook market, with expansion especially marked in the less educated and low-income populations in China.

The rise of telecommunication corporations in digital distribution of ebooks has re-intermediated digital publishing in China and restructured the value chain, particularly by marginalising traditional publishers and ebook stores. However, this has not led to a decentralised, competitive, and diverse industrial structure. Rather, the monopolist telecommunication corporations have established their own monopoly in digital publishing through disruptive innovation and enjoy the commercial benefits of distribution dominance. In addition to cash revenue and profit, ebook business also helps the monopolists in telecommunication industries attract users and Internet traffic, increasing the number of users in their other various services. Although China Mobile used disruptive innovation to translate its monopoly in telecommunications into an advantageous status in the ebook industry, once it became the dominant distribution channel, it gradually returned to the traditional ebook selling models based on individual titles for higher profit margins.

24 TechWeb: Fanshu wang shouru jin 114 wan kuisun 2158 wan番薯网收入仅114万亏损2158万. *Zhongguo chuban wang,* 12 July 2011. http://cips.chinapublish.com.cn/sz/hw/bq/tz/201107/t20110712_90650.html (15 January 2016).

25 Yong Sun 孙永: Zhongguo yidong yuedu jidi jianjie 中国移动阅读基地简介. *Sina*, 10 January 2014. http://book.sina.com.cn/news/v/2014-01-10/1336590520.shtml (15 January 2016).

26 This is a bundle of mobile telecommunication services provided by China Mobile. For a monthly minimum fee of RMB 10, users get 120 complimentary text messages, access to digital content such as ebooks, mobile music, and so on.

Duokan and User-Driven Innovation

Unlike the disruptive innovation implemented by the monopolist companies based on economics of scale and scope, the ebook startups represented by Duokan develop new publishing models based on user-driven innovation and user co-creation. These models focus on comprehensively improving the digital reading experience and enable user participation and co-creation in the development of software, platforms, and ebook content.

Established in 2010 by a group of IT workers, Duokan was originally a technology company with a keen interest in digital reading. It became well-known in the ebook industry for hacking the operating system of Kindle eReaders. In April 2010, Duokan issued the first third-party firmware for Kindle 2 and continued to provide Duokan systems for all available Kindle eReaders. Duokan provides a user-friendly and open alternative to the restrictive and closed official Kindle systems, and one which is free of charge. The Duokan system supports almost all ebook formats with special optimisation for PDF and provides enhanced information functions of searching, highlighting, note-taking, and sharing. It is more compatible and interoperable with other platforms than official Kindle systems. Duokan also has strong Chinese language support, while Kindle firmware did not support Chinese until 2013, when Kindle was officially launched in China. All these innovations removed the exclusions and restrictions set by Amazon for commercial purposes and maximise the benefits of Kindle ownership. Based on its own firmware and the Kindle hardware, Duokan later established an ebook store, producing and selling ebooks to end users.

Apart from the multiple functions of its operating system, Duokan was also trying to improve the visual design and navigation of the ebooks it produced. They believe ebooks are much more than a digitised version of the textual content of print books; rather, good ebooks should have artistic and graphic design in the same way as print books do.[27] In other words, ebooks should digitise the enjoyment of print reading as well. Following such principles, Duokan has invested much more in designing ebooks and improving reading experience than its competitors. Duokan even copyedits the ebook content, as sometimes the quality of digital textual content is very low. The launch of Apple iPad in 2012 challenged digital reading business based on eReaders, but provided new opportunities for Duokan to expand its ebook business to tablets and smartphones. Duokan's mobile phone reading apps on iPads, iPhones, and Android devices follow the same principles of optimising the digital reading experience in terms of functions and visual design. The mobile phones and tablets provide a larger creative space than eReaders. The beautifully designed and high quality ebooks produced by Duokan

27 Lucius: Duokan fu zongzai Hu Xiaodong: Duokan Yuedu de malasong, cai baole yi gongli er yi 多看副总裁胡晓东：多看阅读的马拉松，才跑了一公里而已. *TECH2IPO/Chuangjian*, 6 January 2013. tech2ipo.com/57357 (26 April 2016).

represent something unique in China's ebook market and they contributed to change many people's ideas and expectations with regard to digital reading.[28]

As in all ebook businesses in China, rampant copyright infringement was the biggest threat to Duokan. Originally a technology company, Duokan has developed a complicated DRM (digital right management) system, as a result of which, Duokan ebooks are pirated less than those of other vendors.[29] Additionally, unlike China Mobile Reading Base, which believe in cheap prices, startups like Duokan believe that the habit of consuming copyrighted content can be gradually cultivated in readers through good reading experiences, in spite of the existence of free pirated alternatives. In other words, in competing with digital piracy, this ebook startup expects readers to pay for high quality and well-designed ebooks.

Those who regard Duokan as purely a technology-driven disruptor focusing on the optimisation of digital reading experience tend to neglect another key element of its innovation: user co-creation and social networking. Duokan is perhaps the first enterprise that values and successfully harnesses its users' creativity, collective intelligence, and social networks in the Chinese ebook industry as well as in the publishing industry at large. As soon as it developed its alternative firmware for Kindle eReaders, a participative user forum was set up to encourage collaboration with Chinese ebook lovers.

Duokan is part of Xiaomi Inc., the emerging Chinese mobile phone giant. Xiaomi's principle of valuing user co-creation deeply influences the business models of Duokan, which tries to transform users into partners and fans and build connected and addictive social networks between enterprises and end users. Duokan staff, including senior managers, actively interact with ebook readers in social media and their own online forum, discussing such topics as what books they want to read, what functions they need, and what bugs they have found. Although the state-owned and government-backed publishers have learned to value their readers as a result of the market-oriented reforms, it is still impossible for them to embrace the user-centric Internet culture as much as the startups like Duokan, in particular, listening to readers, responding promptly to their feedback, and working with them in developing and improving digital publishing products and services.

Though the disruptive innovation of Duokan suggests a more forward-looking model and Internet culture than those of traditional publishers in China, the challenge for them is how to monetise their reputation, popularity, and user resources (either collective intelligence or networked communities). Duokan employs the traditional ebook store model to sell individual titles to its users and fans in order to capitalise all these resources accumulated through free software and services. Though the Duokan ebook store has over 7 million registered users, there are only about 50,000 paid users who buy Duokan ebooks, a number which cannot

28 Dan Wu 吴丹/Aihua Ran 冉爱华: Yidong yuedu yingyong de yonghu tiyan bijiao yanjiu 移动阅读应用的用户体验比较研究. *Xiandai tushu qingbao jishu* 31:7-8 (2015), pp. 73-79.

29 Kindle Duokan chongchu Yamaxun多看冲出亚马逊. *Geekpark*, 22 March 2013. http://www.geekpark.net/topics/175427 (15 January 2016).

financially sustain this business initiative and satisfy investors.[30] Another challenge concerns comparative advantages. Though Duokan proves that an optimized and value-added reading experience can be as important as the content for the ebook industry, such disruptive innovation is easy to imitate. In other words, innovations of this kind are not enough to establish a comparative advantage. As a result, Duokan-like ebook design and digital reading optimisation have gradually become industrial standards, adopted by most ebook vendors.

Cultural Impacts of Digital Disruption

Value Propositions of Digital Publishing

In the three case studies one can observe a complex interplay between disruptive innovation and contextual factors in the Chinese ebook industry such as policies, industrial structures, market demands, and publishing cultures. Disruptive innovation enriches the understanding of publishing value proposition in the digital and networked environments and provides forward-thinking strategies for the publishing industry at large. Print publishing builds on scarcity or artificial scarcity of content and creativity, while digital publishing is by nature an economy of abundance. The publishers' role is no longer that of gatekeeping or creating scarcity, but intermediating abundant human creativity while transforming the creative inputs from both authors and readers into tangible economic values in large Internet ecosystems instead of the narrow 'publishing' domain. This echoes the ideas of the creative industries based on dynamics such as population-wide creativity, creative destruction and social network markets rather than the paradigms of the media and copyright industries, or the 'Culture Industry'.[31] This expression is usually applied to the publishing industry.

Disruptive innovation is useful for the innovators to create user growth and stickiness and acquire resources which are otherwise unavailable. But the disruptors must integrate such innovation with other comparative advantages over competitors, which may include a relaxed form of censorship, the possession of a monopoly in the telecommunications industry, or technological capacity. Interestingly, once they become mainstream, the disruptors tend to return to the traditional publishing paradigms which they were previously disrupting, for example, the self-censorship of online literature, China Mobile Reading Base's selling of individual ebook titles in addition to the innovative ebook subscription, and Duokan's use of an ebook store to monetise user resources accumulated through open innovations. This raises the question: Is disruptive innovation in the ebook industry genuine when compared with the

30 Nan Li 李南: Duokan zoudao shizi lukou 多看走到十字路口. *Chubanren* 7 (2014), pp. 26–28.

31 Xiang Ren任翔: Shuzi neirong shengtai yu chubanye de dianfuxing chuangxin 数字内容生态与出版业的颠覆性创新. *Chuban guangjiao* 11 (2012), pp. 17-20. Also see Jason Potts/Stuart Cunningham/John Hartley/Paul Ormerod: Social Network Markets: A New Definition of the Creative Industries. *Journal of Cultural Economics* 32.3 (2008), pp. 167–85.

print-based publishing models? Or does it merely prioritise user growth over sustainability, supported by cross-subsidies that disrupts the value propositions of traditional publishers?

From Passive Consumers to Creative Users

Disruptive innovation provides entertaining content, affordable ebook products (like subscriptions), and optimised reading experiences. All these help to popularise digital reading and widen public access to published knowledge. During 2014 Chinese adults read 3.22 ebooks on average, compared with 4.56 print books.[32] The gap between digital and print reading is decreasing significantly.

Apart from the growth of a digital reading public, the disruptive ebook initiatives imply a significant cultural change in understanding readers, who are shifting from passive consumers to creative users, and even partners. The traditional publishing paradigm in China is a top-down approach, in which elitist authors, institutional authorities, and government-approved publishers provide and determine what people read. Moreover, as widely discussed in Chinese media studies, Chinese publishers like other media organisations are serving two masters: the market and the Party.[33] Although the marketisation reform has made publishing more market-oriented, it is still difficult for the publishers to prioritise readers' interests over their pursuit of the balance between economic benefits (demonstrated by sales) and social benefits, usually approved by the government. In this context, readers are reduced to a statistical indicator of the traditional publishers' performances, either in business or in propaganda.

By contrast, disruptive digital publishing as one aspect of Internet innovation builds on the 'clicks economy' and prioritises maximising readership over other objectives. They do it by empowering, connecting, and collaborating with users. The three cases of disruptive innovation discussed above illustrate the Internet-based publishing culture from various perspectives.

The rise of websites like Qidian, where everyone can write and publish their fictions, democratises literature and disrupts the dominance of professional writers in creating literary content. Moreover, readers' collective choices rather than editorial control determine the fate of literary content. From Web 2.0 to Big Data, technologies are making it increasingly viable for digital publishers to gain an accurate understanding of readers' cultural needs and then to satisfy these needs as far as possible. In addition, the ebook business must optimise and maximise user benefits and convenience in the purchase and reading of ebooks, as demonstrated by the subscription model of China Mobile Reading Base and the optimisation of digital reading by Duokan. Duokan also exemplifies the cultural change in digital publishing in terms of harnessing user co-creation and building networked user communities.

32 Huijiao Xi 息慧娇: Di shier ci quanguo guomin yuedu diaocha shuju zai Jing fabu 第十二次全国国民阅读调查数据在京发布. *Zhongguo xinwen chuban yanjiuyuan website*, 20 April 2015. http://cips.chinapublish.com.cn/gdtp/201504/t20150420_165698.html (15 June 2015).

33 Yuezhi Zhao: *Media, Market, and Democracy in China: Between the Party Line and the Bottom Line*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press 1998.

Digital Enlightenment in Complex Systems

The disruptive innovation of ebooks in China involves cultural elements such as self-expression, cultural resistance, and digital activism, particularly relating to the younger generations born after the 1980s. In the online literature industry, for example, 80 per cent of the readers are between 20 and 39.[34] As the majority of the digital writing and reading publics, these younger generations are keen to develop and express their own cultural identities. For example, Jiu Ye Hui 九夜茴 (Wang Xiaodi 王晓頔, b. 1983), a popular novelist of the post-1990s (*jiu ling hou* 九零后) generation, described her motivation to write as a wish to express herself on behalf of China's one-child generation who feel lonely and lost during their adolescence.[35]

The consumption of ebooks involves digital activism, in particular, the expression of dissatisfaction over present-day society. The cultural phenomenon of *diaosi* is influencing the ebook industry as well as other digital media industries. Sociologically, *diaosi* are young people from middle or low social economic backgrounds who feel disillusioned with 'the apparent lack of possibilities for upward socio-economic mobility in contemporary China'[36], as career advancement and life success depend more and more on social connections and family. They often mockingly express their dissatisfaction in the digital public sphere.[37] As the *diaosi* population becomes the most active demographic among Internet users, the belief is emerging in the Internet industries that 'who can allure the *diaosi* can rule the world' (*de diaosi zhe de tianxia* 得屌丝者得天下). The combination of sociocultural trends and business innovations has enabled Internet industries including ebook initiatives increasingly to become mediators and facilitators of *diaosi* activism in China.

In their production and consumption of ebooks, market-oriented writers and public readers in China are displaying a cultural resistance[38] against official values and institutional authorities which also involves digital activism using seemingly apolitical issues to protest Internet censorship and government control over media and cultures[39]. Many popular online works of fiction contain beliefs, aesthetics, and ideologies that challenge official values. This 'new style of writing' began to emerge before online writing prevailed and as a result of the

34 Fan Xing繁星: 'Wangluo wenxue hangye baipishu' zai Jing fabu 《网络文学行业白皮书》在京发布. In: *Xinhua shumu bao* (4 December 2014), p. 16.

35 Xianggang maofaju: Xianggang shuzhan 2015: Zai Zhongguo: da shidai xia de qingchun xiezuo 香港书展2015：在中国：大时代下的青春写作. *Youtube*, 21 July 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cXFBwc9FwSg (10 January 2016).

36 Szablewicz, The 'losers' of China's Internet.

37 Yang Cheng/Jingwen Liang/Louis Leung: Social Network Service Use on Mobile Devices: An Examination of Gratifications, Civic Attitudes and Civic Engagement in China. *New Media and Society* 17:7 (2014), pp. 1096–16.

38 Dong Han: 'Use' Is an Anagram of 'Sue': Cultural Control, Resistance, and the Role of Copyright in Chinese Cyberspace. *Global Media and Communication* 7:2 (2011), pp. 97–113.

39 Guobin Yang: The History of Digital Activism. *Digital Activism #Now*, 14 March 2014. http://www.digitalactivismnow.org/the-historicity-of-digital-activism-guobin-yang/ (30 June 2016).

marketisation of print publishing.[40] In the era of online literature, Internet authors continue to differentiate themselves from their traditional fellows. For example, Tian Xia Ba Chang 天下霸唱 (张牧野，b. 1978), the author of the very popular work of online literature *Gui chui deng* 鬼吹灯 (The Ghouls), publicly claimed that the original motivation for his writing was simply to chase the girl he loved.[41] It is a popular custom to read and share books which the Chinese government bans or does not approve of.[42] *Jin ping mei* 金瓶梅—the classic Chinese novel that was banned during the print age—has become the most downloaded ebook from the Duokan platform. A growing number of readers share politically sensitive ebooks purchased from international ebook stores in various online communities such as Baidu Tieba 百度贴吧 and Kindleren (though the latter has now removed its online sharing function) and without copyright authorisation. Social media users show strong sympathy and support for piracy-related websites and some even regard copyright infringements and unauthorised sharing as a form of resistance against censorship.[43]

The democratisation of publishing, as well as the shift from elitism to mass culture, is not free of controversy. The prevalence of entertainment, pulp content, and pornography in the ebook industry is a worrisome trend. For quite a while, almost all the most-read ebooks available from China Mobile Reading Base have used soft pornography as a selling-point. People's worries about the decline of the quality and value of public digital reading is thus understandable.

It would be misleading to assess the cultural value of disruptive innovation by taking a black and white approach. In book history, the growth of public reading has contributed to the democratization of knowledge and mass enlightenment.[44] The disruptive models of ebooks have greatly broadened the scale and scope of public reading, particularly beyond the boundaries drawn by the official institutions in China. Digital enlightenment is not as straightforward as when 'one book changed millions of lives' in the print age, and neither is it a top-down process which elite intellectuals can dominate and control. Rather, digital enlightenment is a chaotic bottom-up process. Enlightenment is closely linked to self-expression, activism, and cultural resistance. Every creative citizen is playing a role, making contributions

40 Daria Berg: Consuming Secrets: China's New Print Culture at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century. In: Cynthia Brokaw, Christopher Reeds (eds): *From Woodblocks to the Internet*. Leiden: Brill 2010, pp. 315–32.

41 See interview with the writer Tian Xia Ba Chang tan *Gui chui deng* 天下霸唱谈《鬼吹灯》, *Wangyi xinwen*, 15 December 2015. http://news.163.com/special/00011N8F/fictionistzhang.html (10 June 2016).

42 Chris Buckley: On Hong Kong Shelves, Illicit Dirt on China's Elite. *The New York Times*, 18 May 2013. http://cn.nytimes.com/china/20130520/c20hongkong/en-us/ (27 April 2016).

43 See for example Pinky Latt: Qvod CEO on Trial for Disseminating Pornography Wins Netizen Support with Spirited Defense. *Shanghaiist*, 12 January 2016. http://shanghaiist.com/2016/01/12/qvod_pornography_case.php (27 April 2016).

44 Queenie Dorothy Leavis: *Fiction and the Reading Public*. London: Chatto and Windus 1939.

and differences; conflicting messages, values, and forms of behaviour coexist and mutually shape each other. Overall it is a complex system which nobody, including the government, can completely control.[45] The disruptive innovation of the ebook industry is part of this complex process and system. The value of digital disruption lies in widening public access to knowledge, connecting authors and readers, and empowering them more than ever before.

Conclusion

The Internet as a disruptive technology undermines the basis of traditional book publishing. The rise of digital technologies and networked innovations challenges the crucial value propositions of traditional publishers as gatekeepers and intermediaries.[46] Book publishing is thus unavoidably involved in the broad process of creative destruction. All these global trends shape disruptive innovation in the Chinese ebook industry. The innovations could be interpreted as a combination of the application of universal Internet dynamics and the addressing of 'Chinese characteristics', a combination that involves a complex interplay between disruptive technologies and contextual factors.

The digital disruption in the Chinese ebook industry happened when the industry was emerging at a rapid rate and from almost zero. The market gaps, the regulatory vacuum or 'special zones', and the lagging traditional publishing sector all helped to bring about the rise of disruptive innovators. Yet this golden age of digital disruption might now be over. The ebook industry is currently highly concentrated and dominated by big players. The involvement of the Chinese Internet giants known as BAT (Baidu, Alibaba, and Tencent) further increases this concentration. Regulation is evolving alongside digital innovations and is becoming increasingly capable of regulating digital content and digital media. The state-owned and traditional publishing sectors are growing more ambitious in digital publishing and investing heavily in transformations, with strong government sponsorship and policy support. As such, there will soon not be much space for digital disruptors to play a significant game-changing role.

However, disruptive innovation will continue to occur. In the unique Chinese context, the interplay between disruptive innovation and contextual factors will still be a defining feature. As before, the game-changers, as well as those who are dissatisfied with the current situation, will expect disruptive innovation to function as a catalyst, not only for the transformation or evolution of the publishing industry, but also for the cultural change and transition of the Chinese digital society at large.

45 McNair, *Cultural Chaos*.
46 Xiang Ren, Creative Users, pp. 58–67.

14
Blogging and Intellectual Life in Twenty-First Century China

Giorgio Strafella and Daria Berg

Introduction

This chapter aims at appraising the impact of blogging (*boke* 博客) and other forms of online self-publication on Chinese intellectual life. In particular, it focuses on online writers that correspond to the definition of 'bloggers' as 'opinionated people' who 'post their thoughts, experiences and politics' online.[1] By looking at blogging, this study will shed light on how the spread of Internet usage in China since the late 1990s has changed public discourse and the role of traditional gatekeepers such as the Party-state and publishers.

The rise in Internet users since the late 1990s (Figure 1) and the popularisation of bulletin board systems (BBS), emails, blogging, micro-blogging and platforms like WeChat (*Weixin* 微信) have transformed intellectual life in China. Blogs in China have mushroomed from about 500,000 in 2002 to more than 474 million in June 2015, meaning that in 2015 there were seven blogs for every ten netizens (Figure 2). *Weibo* 微博 accounts numbered 204 million.[2]

Online platforms allow opinions and creative works to circulate widely outside the traditional channels and platforms where the Party-state acts as both gatekeeper and police, i.e. via traditional print and broadcast media. Before the advent of online platforms, only a small part of the Chinese population—including Party leaders, state officials, establishment journalists and intellectuals—was able and allowed to spread information and commentary nationwide via the traditional media. These groups have consisted largely of male Han 汉 citizens. As a result, as Benjamin Schwartz lamented, 'intellectual history' seemed to include only the history of officials and intellectuals rather than 'the totality of conscious life', including the emotions, imagination and sensibility of the whole society.[3] The Internet and blogging have changed this, opening up new dimensions in Chinese intellectual life and its study. Even though 'the

1 Kaye D. Trammell/Ana Keshelashvili: Examining the New Influencers. A Self-Presentation Study of A-list Blogs. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 82:4 (2005), p. 968.

2 Zhongguo hulian wangluo xinxi zhongxin 中国互联网络信息中心 (CNNIC): Di 36 ci Zhongguo hulian wangluo fazhan zhuangkuang tongji baogao 第36次中国互联网络发展状况统计报告, July 2015. http://www.cnnic.net.cn/hlwfzyj/hlwxzbg/hlwtjbg/201507/P020150723549500667087.pdf (31 August 2015).

3 Benjamin I. Schwartz: A Brief Defense of Political and Intellectual History... with Particular Reference to Non-Western Cultures. *Daedalus* 100:1 (1971), pp. 98–112.

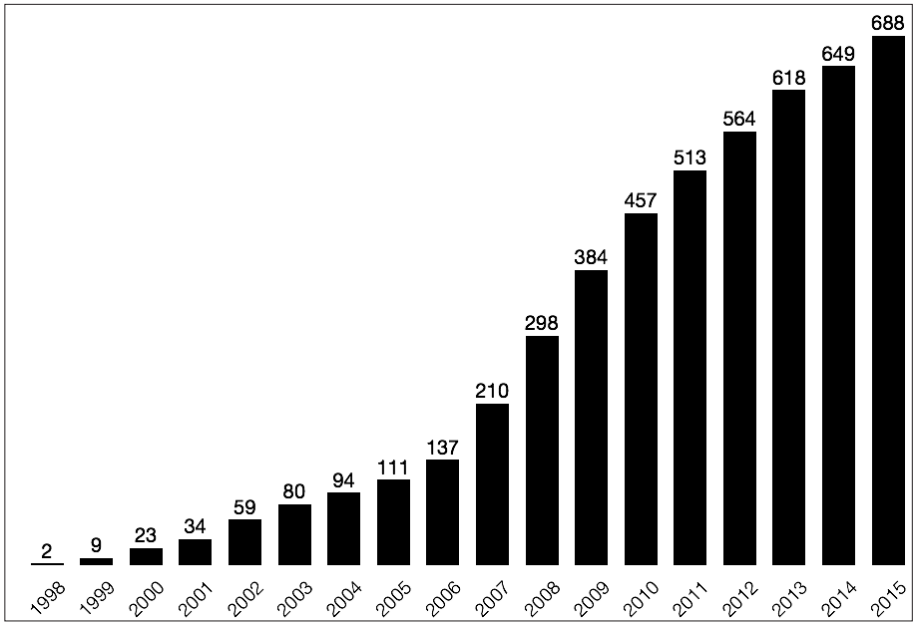

Figure 1: Internet users in China, million, 1998-2015 (data source: CNNIC 2015).

Chinese Internet' has emerged as a research area in itself during the last two decades[4], it is worth stressing that 'online China' is integral to the socio-political reality of contemporary China rather than a distinct world.

Blogs by women and ethnic minorities[5]—two groups that have been long marginalised in China's intellectual and political spheres—instantiate how blogging contributes to widening the horizons of intellectual life in the country. The notorious sex blog by a female journalist, Muzi Mei 木子美 (b. 1978), scandalized China in 2003 while also boosting the adoption and consumption of this form of communication. Muzi Mei created shock waves among the Internet reading audience with the stories of her erotic adventures with celebrities from the contemporary art and music world, pushing the limits of what was acceptable in social and

4 See David Kurt Herold/Gabriel de Seta: Through the Looking Glass. Twenty Years of Chinese Internet Research. *The Information Society* 31:1 (2015), pp. 68–82.

5 On how Tibetans have used online platforms such as blogs to challenge narratives of 'Tibetanness' by both the Chinese Party-state and the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, see Tricia Kehoe: I Am Tibetan? An Exploration of Online Identity Constructions among Tibetans in China. *Asian Ethnicity* 16:3 (2015), pp. 314–33. On Uyghur-language blogs as a site for political activism, see Rebecca A. Clothey/Emmanuel F. Koku/Erfan Erkin/Husenjan Emat: A Voice for the Voiceless. Online Social Activism in Uyghur Language Blogs and State Control of the Internet in China. *Information, Communication & Society* 19:6 (2015), pp. 858–74.

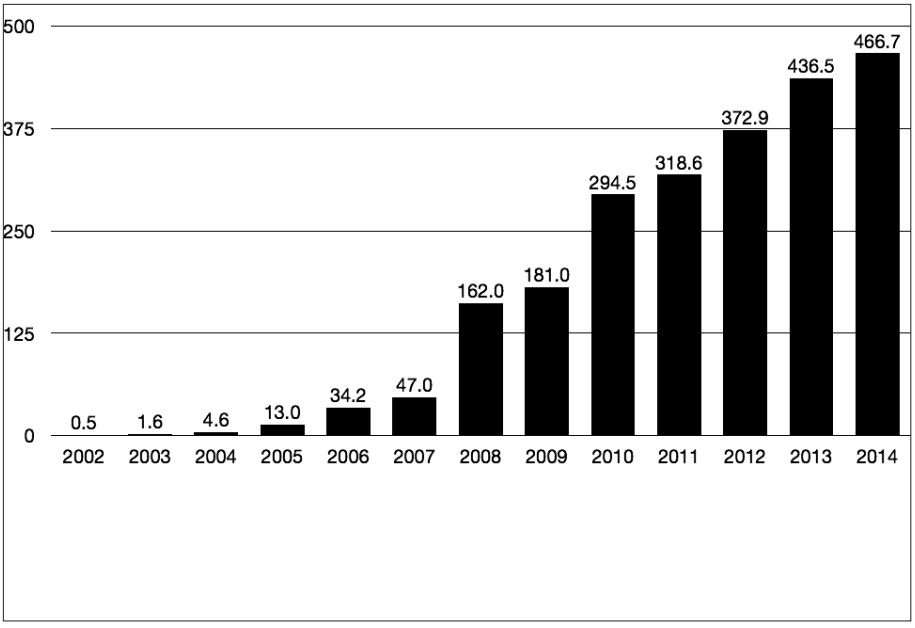

Figure 2: Bloggers in China, million, 2002–2014 (data source: CNNIC 2015).

literary terms in contemporary China. Her readers did not seem to take into account that Muzi Mei actually peddled a literary product that merely gave them the illusion of gaining access to the pages of a young woman's intimate diary.[6] Before Han Han 韩寒 (b. 1982) became the most-read blogger in the world around 2007, that title was held by actress, film director and editor Xu Jinglei 徐静蕾 (b. 1974).[7] In 2009 a survey revealed that 55 per cent of China's bloggers were female.[8] Female comedian and cultural entrepreneur Papi Jiang

6 On Muzi Mei see Daria Berg: Consuming Secrets. China's New Print Culture at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century. In: Cynthia Brokaw/Christopher A. Reed (eds): *From Woodblocks to the Internet. Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition, circa 1800 to 2008*. Leiden: Brill 2010, pp. 315-32. On Muzi Mei and other women bloggers see also Kay Schaffer/Xianlin Song: *Women Writers in Postsocialist China*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge 2014, pp. 96–100.

7 See Xinhua: Xu Jinglei Most Popular Blogger in the World, *China Daily*, 24 August 2006. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2006-08/24/content_672747.htm (20 January 2016). Her blog is http://blog.sina.com.cn/xujinglei (20 January 2016) and so far had over 313 million visitors. Xu quit regular blogging around 2010. On Han Han see also Chapter 7.

8 Zhongguo hulian wangluo xinxi zhongxin 中国互联网络信息中心 (CNNIC): 2008–2009 Zhongguo boke shichang ji boke xingwei yanjiu baogao 2008-2009 中国博客市场及博客行为研究报告, July 2009. https://www.cnnic.net.cn/ hlwfzyj/hlwxzbg/sqbg/201206/P020120612509155387996.pdf (30 July 2015). See below in this chapter for more on this survey.

(Papi 酱, also known as Jiang Yilei 姜逸磊, b. 1987) is currently the most successful video-blogger in the country.[9]

From Citizen Publications to Blogs

Citizen magazines' or *minkan* 民刊, i.e. publications whose production and distribution are independent from Party-state control[10], represented the main vehicle to spread information and commentary outside the official channels before Internet usage and blogging took hold. Quashed after 1949, *minkan* reappeared in 1957 and became widespread after 1978 as a way to reclaim territory in public space from official propaganda. This form of print publication bears several similarities to blogging.

In his 2015 study of *minkan* Shao Jiang 邵江 (b. 1968), a scholar and human rights activist, argues that they can be considered a 'social barometer of political and social interaction'.[11] Shao Jiang describes *minkan* as: (1) A collection of miscellaneous texts that encourages the reader not only to understand them, but also to 'overstand' them (i.e. to over-interpret said texts and explore further than the content of the publication itself, especially under censorship); (2) Aiming to influence public opinion; (3) Attempting to publish at regular intervals; (4) Commenting on events, rather than simply reporting them; (5) Reproduced in multiple copies; (6) A mode of organisation under conditions of restricted freedom of association; and (7) A publication within the relatively closed network of a student or a pro-democracy movement.[12]

Shao Jiang's description of *minkan*—especially points 1 to 5—can also describe blogging as defined in this chapter. 'Citizen bloggers', as opposed to official bloggers and group bloggers, have dominated the Chinese blogosphere, including political blogging.[13] As far as the blog's potential to be 'overstood' is concerned (point 1), Zhou Yongming stressed that one should never neglect the role of the reader in deciphering and interpreting the content of

9 See Mei Jing Wang 每经网: '2016 nian di yi wang hong' Papi Jiang '2016年第一网红' Papi酱. 21 March 2016. http://www.nbd.com.cn/articles/2016-03-21/992594.html (24 April 2016); Shanghai Daily: Papi Jiang's Sensation Attracts US$3.4m. 22 April 2016. http://www.china.org.cn/business/2016-04/22/content_38300855.htm (24 April 2016). The audience of Papi Jiang's monologues on dating and being a young single woman in China mainly comprises netizens born in the 1990s.

10 Mainly because they are not published by officially registered publishing houses and did not obtain ISSN or ISBN numbers from the relevant authority, i.e. the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT) and formerly (until 2013) the General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP).

11 Shao Jiang: *Citizen Publications in China before the Internet.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2015.

12 Shao Jiang, *Citizens Publications*, p. 2.

13 Zhang Lei 张雷/Luo Chengwu娄成武: 'Zhengzhi boke' de fazhan xianzhuang ji qi weilai qushi '政治博客'的发展现状及其未来趋势. *Zhongshan Daxue Xuebao Shehui Kexue Ban* 46:4 (2006), pp. 99–102.

minjian 民间 (i.e. non-official) political blogs.[14] Esarey and Qiang also observed how readers of blogs that satirise or criticise the authorities know the risks their authors face by doing so, and the bloggers in turn rely on this awareness and the reader's ability to 'fill in the blanks' of self-censorship.[15]

This also points at how Chinese bloggers have been able to carry out socio-political critique by taking advantage of the relatively 'high context' nature of online conversations[16] while bypassing keyword-based censorship. When the Nobel Peace Prize Committee announced the academic-cum-writer Liu Xiaobo 刘晓波 (b.1955) as the 2010 winner, the Chinese government released only a statement criticising him as the co-author of the Charter 08, a web-based petition demanding freedom of speech and democratisation, while attempting to block media coverage of the honour bestowed upon him. Han Han posted a 'commentary' on his blog that consisted only of open and close inverted commas with a blank space in between, apparently simulating the government's censorship of the event in the official media.[17] Han Han's blog post (see Figure 3) illustrates how a blogger can eloquently comment on a topic at the centre of public attention without explicitly mentioning it. Given how the authorities appeared to censor non-official statements on Liu's award at the time, Han Han's post, with 1.5 million hits, was probably the non-official (critical) 'comment' on that event to reach the widest audience within the so-called 'Great Firewall'.

With regard to points 2 and 4 of Shao Jiang's definition of *minkan*, Chinese blogs have arguably benefited from relatively low popular trust in official media[18] to become platforms that tell and especially comment on news stories. While benefiting from the credibility deficit of mainstream news media, blogs can also increase this deficit by exposing the shortcomings

14 Zhou Yongming: Living on the Cyber Border. *Minjian* Political Writers in Chinese Cyberspace. *Current Anthropology* 46:5 (2005), p. 780.

15 Ashley Esaray/Xiao Qiang: Political Expression in the Chinese Blogosphere: Below the Radar. *Asian Survey* 48:5 (2008), p. 770.

16 'High context' communication requires the possession of a significant amount of 'insider' information to decode its meaning, as opposed to 'low context' communication. See 'Context and Meaning', in: Edward T. Hall: *Beyond Culture.* New York: Anchor 1976, pp. 83–103.

17 It is worth noting that politically sensitive online content is policed and censored not only by government authorities, but also by Web companies (i.e. Internet service and content providers); see Rebecca MacKinnon: China's Censorship 2.0: How Companies Censor Bloggers. *First Monday* 14:2 (2009). http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2378/2089 (16 March 2016).

18 Surveys conducted from 2002 to 2009 found that Chinese readers considered non-official newspapers more trustworthy than official Party papers. In a 2002 Beijing Readership Survey, for instance, a staggering 83 per cent of newspaper readers declared that they trusted non-official papers more than official ones. See Daniela Stockman: *Media Commercialisation and Authoritarian Rule in China.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013, pp. 164–66.

Figure 3: Han Han published this post, titled '8 October 2010' (i.e. the date on which Liu Xiaobo's award was announced) on 9 October 2010 (screenshot of Han Han's blog taken on 24 April 2016, http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4701280b0100lvjb.html, 10 August 2016).

of those media.[19] This is arguably a case of what Hassid calls 'pressure cooker' blogs, i.e. spaces where netizens call attention to underreported events and issues of public concern.[20]

Many netizens have used the Web to raise public attention over issues underreported in the official media and to promote collective action. Zhao Lianhai 赵连海 (b. 1972) for

19 Tamara Leaver discussed this with reference to the interaction of US blogs and broadcast news media. See Tamara Leaver: The blogging of everyday life. *Reconstruction: Studies in Contemporary Culture* 6:4 (2006). http://reconstruction.eserver.org/Issues/064/leaver.shtml (20 February 2014).

20 Jonathan Hassid: Safety Valve or Pressure Cooker? Blogs in Chinese Political Life. *Journal of Communication* 62 (2012), pp. 212–30; Giorgio Strafella/Daria Berg: The Making of an Online Celebrity. A Critical Analysis of Han Han's Blog. *China Information* 29:3 (2015), 352–76.

example set up a website to attract attention over the 2008 tainted milk scandal.[21] Lian Yue 连岳 (b. 1970), a popular blogger and author of China's first Twitter novel[22], used his blog in March 2007 to persuade Xiamen citizens to oppose plans for a new paraxylene (PX) factory.[23] During the ensuing street demonstrations celebrity blogger and citizen journalist Zola 佐拉 (Zhou Shuguang 周曙光, b. 1981) uploaded photos of the protests on his blog.[24] The authorities eventually bowed to public pressure and relocated the planned factory to Fujian.[25] Huang and Yip observe that in incidents such as the anti-PX protests the Internet acts as an information-exchange hub, a platform for discussion, a mobilisation structure, and a facilitator in locating external allies.[26]

Blogs thrive on framing their content as the voice of independent individuals that speak directly and frankly to their readership. Foreign policy bloggers such as Ji An 吉安 and An Ti 安替 (Michael Anti, or Zhao Jing 赵静, b. 1975) have attracted their readership by interpreting the news and providing 'personal' analyses of current events, rather than reporting on them, while emphasising their identity as 'independent thinkers'.[27] Posing as the 'man in the street' who expresses his views without editorial oversight and without conforming to the style of mainstream journalistic and academic writing sometimes becomes a rhetorical strategy, as the cases of Han Han and Zhou Xiaoping 周小平 (b. 1981) illustrate.[28]

Finally, blogs have revolutionised intellectual life and publishing in China by obliterating the material limits to the reproduction of *minkan* in multiple copies (point 5). Party-state authorities, Internet Content Providers (e.g. Sina, Tencent) in charge of blogging platforms, or the blogger her/himself can delete a blog post from its original webpage without leaving anything except a '404 Not Found' error message. However, netizen-readers can just as easily copy the text, save it offline, email it, share it by direct message, re-post it on a different webpage, or even preserve it as a screen-shot image and share it in this format on platforms such as WeChat and Weibo—thus eluding keyword filtering, and disseminating the text rapidly

21 See Jonathan Benney: *Defending Rights in Contemporary China*. London and New York: Routledge 2013, pp. 1–3.

22 See Juliet Ye: China's first Twitter novel. *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 March 2007. http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2010/03/11/chinas-first-twitter-novel (17 March 2014).

23 See Mo Ming: The Biggest Chemical Project Puts Xiamen in Danger. *China Digital Times*, 6 April 2007. https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2007/04/the-biggest-chemical-project-puts-xiamen-in-danger (28 March 2014).

24 See Johan Lagerkvist: *After the Internet, before Democracy. Competing Norms in Chinese Media and Society*. Bern: Lang 2010, p. 84.

25 See e.g. Ronggui Huang/Ngai-ming Yip: Internet and Activism in Urban China. A Case Study of Protests in Xiamen and Panyu. *Journal of Comparative Asian Development* 11:2 (2012), pp. 208-11.

26 Ronggui Huang/Ngai-ming Yip, Internet and Activism in Urban China, p. 14.

27 Zhou Yongming, Living on the Cyber Border, p. 782.

28 See further in this chapter and Giorgio Strafella/Daria Berg: A Decade of Blogging in China. *China Policy Institute Blog*, 31 August 2015. https://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/chinapolicyinstitute/2015/08/31/a-decade-of-blogging-in-china/ (10 November 2015).

and widely. While censorship and self-censorship marginalise critical views in the Chinese blogosphere, blog texts are as resilient as 'poisonous weeds'—a metaphorical expression often used under Mao to describe 'unhealthy', 'anti-revolutionary' cultural texts that authorities wanted 'eradicated'.[29]

Blog Statistics

The China Internet Network Information Centre (Zhongguo hulian wangluo xinxi zhongxin 中国互联网络信息中心; CNNIC), an official government agency, carried out a research survey on the blog market and blogging behaviour in the country in 2009.[30] Although now slightly dated, this important study sheds light on Chinese bloggers as well as on the netizens' attitude towards blogs. To date it remains the most comprehensive set of statistics on this phenomenon.

The survey found that over 86 per cent of China's bloggers were 30 year old or younger, with over 50 per cent of them between the ages of 18 and 24. Netizens born during Reform and Opening Up—that is, who did not experience Mao's socialist era—have dominated China's blogosphere. Over 55 per cent of bloggers were students, while 21.6 per cent earned between RMB 2,000 and RMB 5,000 (ca. USD 300-750) per month. Less than twelve per cent of bloggers earned less than RMB 2,000 per month. By contrast, the average monthly wage in 2008 was just below RMB 2,500 (ca. USD 380).[31] According to CNNIC's survey, virtually all the bloggers who were not students worked in the tertiary sector of the economy, including seven per cent in the IT sector and 5.9 per cent in the banking and finance industry. The smallest group mentioned in the survey consists of 'civil servants and translators' (1.4 per cent). Farmers and factory workers do not figure in the survey's professional breakdown of China's blogosphere, reinforcing the impression of blogging as a white-collar, middle-class pursuit.

Figure 4 shows how bloggers answered the survey question on why they created a blog. The overwhelming majority of them identified 'to record my experiences and emotions' as one of the reasons they decided to do so. A small but significant group of bloggers stated that commenting on current events was at least one of the things they planned to do when they started blogging. It is worth noting the predominance of blogging as a public diary of one's everyday life. Even well-known social commentators like Ai Weiwei 艾未未 (b. 1957)

29 See Wanning Sun: From Poisonous Weeds to Endangered Species. *Shenghuo* TV, Media Ecology and Stability Maintenance. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 44:2 (2015), p. 26. As Han Han learned with his short-lived magazine, *Du chang tuan* 独唱团 (English title: *Party*), it is far easier to seize and pulp all the unsold copies of a print publication than to remove a blog post from online circulation.

30 CNNIC, 2008–2009 Zhongguo boke shichang ji boke xingwei yanjiu baogao.

31 Data from the National Bureau of Statistics of China: China's Statistical Yearbook 2009, http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2009/indexeh.htm (20 November 2015).

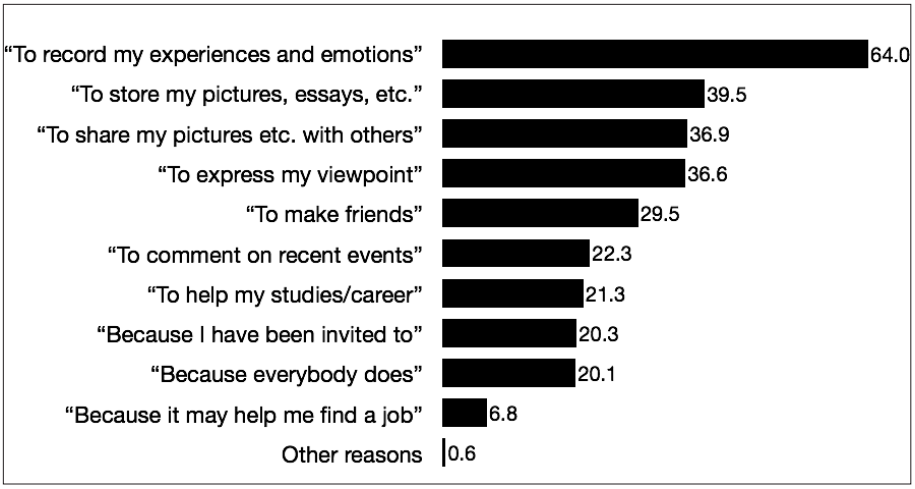

Figure 4: Bloggers' answer to the question, 'Why did you start a blog?', percentages (data source: CNNIC 2009).

and Han Han frame their online critiques of social issues as moments in a wider, seamless chronicle of their lives. Their online platforms alternate pictures and images of their quotidian with individual reflections on those issues—reflections that frequently appear anchored to their personal experience. Their blogs thus stage a spectacle of (out-of-the-ordinary) everyday lives—a one-man reality show, so to speak—that invites voyeurism as well as socio-political concern.[32]

As mentioned above, lack of trust in official news media may be a reason behind the rise in the popularity of blogging in China. The CNNIC survey found that 47.7 per cent of blog readers regarded all or most information found in blogs as trustworthy, while 44.8 of them believed 'about half of it' to be reliable. Only a tiny 0.9 per cent of blog readers described blogs as 'untrustworthy'. This is especially remarkable given the above-mentioned low level of trust in official newspapers.

The 2009 survey also explored the related issue of responsibility among bloggers and blog readers. Over 83 per cent of bloggers agreed that 'the Internet is part of real life and you have to take responsibility for what you say online' while 16.4 of them maintained that 'the Internet is not real and you can say whatever you want'. When asked about the bloggers' responsibility, 81 per cent of readers agreed with the statement that 'the blog is a kind of mass

32 On the reality show trend in China see Daria Berg: A New Spectacle in China's Mediasphere. A Cultural Reading of a Web-Based Reality Show from Shanghai. *China Quarterly* 205 (2011), pp. 133–51. On Han Han and Ai Weiwei see also further in this chapter.

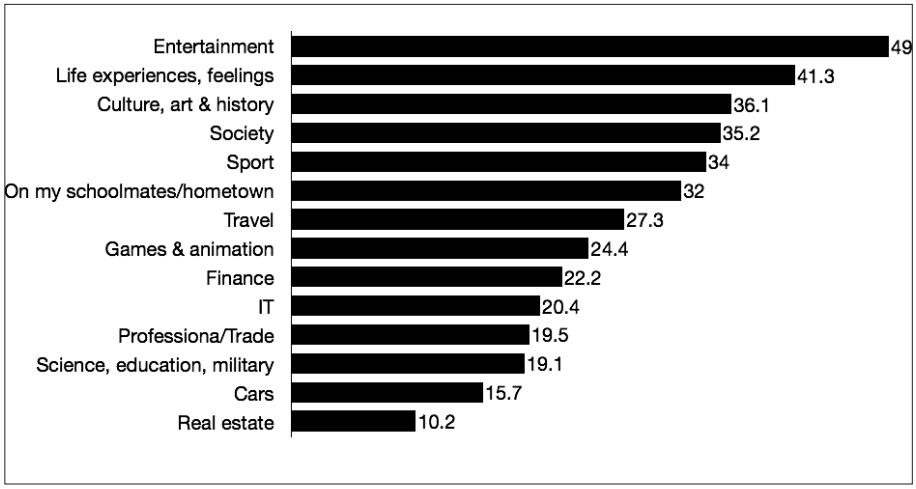

Figure 5: Blog readers' answers to the question, 'What kind of blogs do you read?', percentages (data source: CNNIC 2009).

media and there is a limit to what a blogger can say'. Only 15.4 per cent believed that 'a blog is a personal space and bloggers have no responsibility towards anyone', while 3.2 per cent declared they did not care about this issue. It is noteworthy that CNNIC's question to blog readers did not focus on whether a blogger has the responsibility to be truthful, but on the limits of public speech and a blogger's responsibility for the potential societal or ideological consequences of blog writing.

As Figure 5 shows, 'entertainment' constituted the most popular blog content among readers (49 per cent), followed by 'life experiences and feelings' (41.3 per cent) and 'culture, art and history' (36.1 per cent). In 2013 we browsed through the top 100 blogs by number of visits on the Sina blogging platform and noted the prevalent content of each blog (see Figure 6). 'Blogs' providing stock market tips and news—often in the form of telegraphic entries—occupy the top spots in Sina's ranking and account for 29 of the one hundred most visited blogs. Blogs mainly covering 'show business' news and personalities are also prominent in the list (23 websites). Essays on cultural and social topics constituted the prevalent content of 16 blogs among the top one hundred. In the next sections we examine two prominent bloggers whose online musings combine the elements of culture and art, social commentary and celebrity.

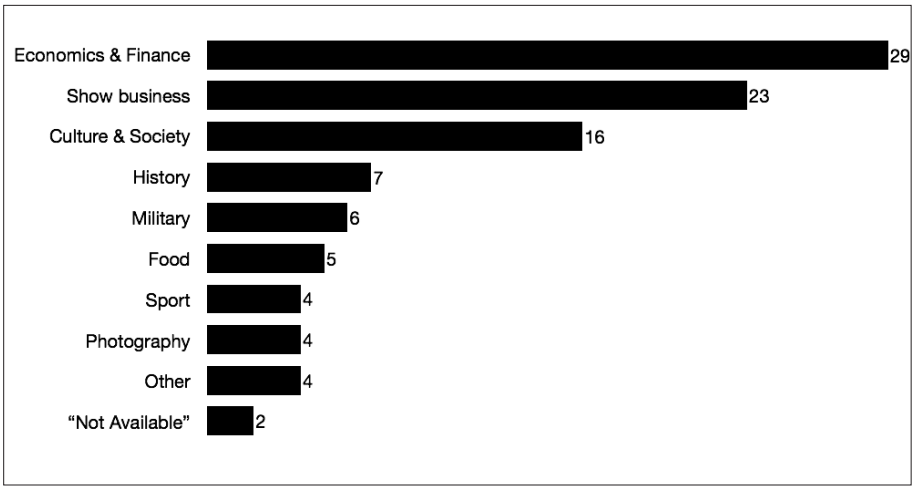

Figure 6: Authors' survey of prevalent content of the one hundred most visited blogs on Sina.com (2013).

The Uncompromising Blogger

Artist-cum-activist Ai Weiwei's first and main blog was hosted by Sina.com (Xinlang wang 新浪网) from 2005 until its deletion in 2009.[33] The artist has adopted blogging, micro-blogging and other social media as a way to connect and correspond with the wider society in the most unmediated way, i.e. without either the barriers of shyness, the boundaries of personal relationship, or geographical limits.[34] Based on what Ai Weiwei told Hans Ulrich Obrist in 2006, his blog was born when media corporation Sina invited him to create it on its website. Sina was encouraging celebrities and public personalities to do so as a marketing move to lure more netizens onto their blogging website.[35] Nonetheless Ai Weiwei's blog turned the tables on this brand endorsement strategy, emerging as a space for public expression and social critique.

33 Before they were all shut down in May 2009 Ai Weiwei ran three blogs, the main one on the portal Sina.com (blog.sina.com.cn/aiweiwei, which we refer to here as 'Sina blog' or 'his blog'), one hosted by Sohu.com and another on 163.com. See Zhai Minglei 翟明磊: Ai Weiwei: Ru ru wu ren zhi jing 艾未未：如入无人之境. In: Zhai Minglei 翟明磊 et al. (eds): *Zhongguo mengbo* 中国猛博. Hong Kong: Cosmos Books 2009, pp. 43–71. The original Sina blog essays, together with more recent posts, were later made available at www.bullogger.com/blogs/aiww (29 November 2011). Ai joined Google+ in 2011.

34 Ai Weiwei/Hans Ulrich Obrist: *Ai Weiwei Speaks*. London: Penguin 2011; Lee Ambrozy: Introduction. In: Ai Weiwei/Lee Ambrozy: *Ai Weiwei's Blog*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2011, pp. xvi–xxviii.

35 Ai Weiwei/Obrist, *Ai Weiwei Speaks*, pp. 3–23.

Blogging and Web 2.0 probably represented Ai Weiwei's first contact with the new digital information and communication technologies. The artist was immediately mesmerised by the communicative potential of blogging and persuaded of the emancipatory power of the Web in general, coming to the conclusion that 'the Internet is the natural enemy of autocracy'.[36] Convinced of the anti-authoritarian potential of the Internet in general, and blogging in particular, he used his blog to experiment with new techniques and languages that aimed at realising that potential. Thanks to the integration of different media such as video (e.g. documentaries), photos and audio recordings, and to the possibility of disaggregating a narrative into a flow of articles and soundbites, Ai Weiwei's blog represented a step towards a new communicative modality for the Chinese intellectual in an era of cultural commercialisation and hyper-connectivity. The documentaries produced by his team and shared through the Web are but one example.[37]

Ai Weiwei's blogging and micro-blogging reflect the concept condensed in Marshall McLuhan's famous maxim, 'the medium is the message'.[38] The direct and interactive modality of communication allowed by these media expresses those very ideals of responsiveness, openness and active co-ordination among citizens that Ai Weiwei aims to disseminate through his political advocacy. These characteristics of Ai Weiwei's media of choice stand in stark contrast with the one-way teacher-student relationship that used to dominate communication between the intellectuals and the masses in China[39], with the overall opacity and unresponsiveness of the Chinese authorities toward Chinese citizens and the international community and with the penchant for monolithic socio-political narratives still displayed by Chinese mainstream news media. As Alison Klayman noted, 'In a society where all official media is subject to censorship—from microblogs up to Party papers—that's also an incredibly subversive thing to be able to connect to people'.[40]

36 Tweet, @aiww, 14 August 2010. See also Ai Weiwei 艾未未: Zuowei zuopin de 'Tonghua' 作为作品的‘童话', Sina blog (20 July 2007). In 2006 Ai Weiwei declared: 'Power and the centre have suddenly disappeared in the universal sense because of the Internet, global politics, and the economy. The techniques of the Internet have become a major way of liberating humans from old values and systems, something that has never been possible until today' (Ai Weiwei/Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Ai Weiwei Speaks*, p. 6).

37 E.g. *Lao ma ti hua*老妈蹄花 (2009) and *Shen biao yihan* 深表遗憾 (2011), both available at http://www.aiweiwei.com/documentaries/ (10 May 2016).

38 See Marshall McLuhan: *Understanding Media.* London: Taylor & Francis 2005.

39 See in particular Timothy Cheek: From Priests to Professionals. Intellectuals and the State under the CCP. In: Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom/Elizabeth J. Perry (eds): *Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China*, 2nd edition. Boulder, CO: Westview 1994, pp. 184–205; and Hua Shiping: One Servant, Two Masters. The Dilemma of Chinese Establishment Intellectuals. *Modern China* 20:1 (1994), pp. 92–121.

40 In John D. Sutter: How Chinese Activist Ai Weiwei Became an Internet Master. *CNN*, 16 November 2011. http://edition.cnn.com/2011/11/08/tech/innovation/ai-weiwei-documentary-poptech/index.html (16 December 2011).

Also in light of Ai Weiwei's 1997 manifesto, 'Making Choices'[41], the reason why blogging and social media occupy such a central role in his practice is because he has absolute trust in the power of free speech and free flow of information as the basis for social change. He wrote in 2009:

> Without one's own voice and free exchange of information, there is no people, no working class; the common interest of humanity is impossible; your own existence is impossible; and authentic social change will never occur. In fact, the first step of such change lies in regaining the power of free speech. A society without such freedom is pitch dark, so dark that everywhere you look outside it, it looks bright.[42]

Ai Weiwei's blog is far from being a simple online personal journal or a collection of political aphorisms. It also aims to be a tool for action and participation. For instance, Ai Weiwei used his blog to organise the artistic performance *Tonghua* 童话 (Fairytale, Kassel 2007), which involved 1,001 people from all over China, and to co-ordinate and publicise a two hundred-strong citizen investigation into the deaths of schoolchildren in the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake.[43] In 2011–2012 he used a Google+ account to keep the world up to date about the accusation of economic crimes made against him by the authorities after his release from detention.[44] Ai Weiwei's blogging represents a way to collect and spread information while also mobilising and sensitising its readers. With these actions and the media coverage they have generated Ai Weiwei has been able to spread his artistic-political message world-wide and assume an iconic status well beyond the art world.

From another point of view, especially through the hundreds of photos published on his blog, Ai Weiwei has provided his web-fans with an almost real-time, 'privileged' peek into the spectacle of his everyday life. Shortly before it was shut down, the artist declared that ninety per cent of his energy was put into blogging[45], a statement which reflects how blogging had in fact become his everyday life. This claim finds confirmation in an average of 2.5 blog posts a day communicating the artist's travels, meetings, thoughts and experiences. Everything around the artist seems to be worth a picture, be it a food delicacy, a journalist, a television screen, a

41 Ai Weiwei 艾未未: *Zuochu xuanze* 做出选择. In: Zeng Xiaojun曾小俊/Ai Weiwei 艾未未 (eds): *Zhongguo Beijing* 1997 中国北京1997. Beijing: unknown 1997, pp. 9-11; this volume is also known as 'the Grey Book'. With some changes and under a new title (Zhe manchang de lu 这漫长的路, 'This long road') the essay also appeared among Ai's first blog posts (23 February 2006).

42 Ai Weiwei 艾未未: Women shi zenme luodao jintian de dibu de 我们是怎么落到今天的地步的, Sina blog (16 May 2009).

43 See e.g. Ai Weiwei 艾未未: Wenchuan dizhen siwang xuesheng diaocha 汶川地震死亡学生调查, Sina blog (13 March 2009).

44 See Melissa Chan: Legal Battles Tax China's Ai Weiwei. *Al Jazeera*, 14 November. http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia-pacific/2011/11/20111114185450758387.html (5 December 2011).

45 Simon Elegant/Ai Weiwei: This Time for Real. *Time*, 29 May 2009. http://china.blogs.time.com/2009/05/13/ai-weiwei-transcript-for-real-this-time/ (22 November 2011).

building, a police officer or a passer-by. The blog visitor has the impression of following the artist's gaze everywhere, in all circumstances, whether social or private.[46]

Blogging and micro-blogging allows Ai to blend and project his various personae throughout cyberspace by means of a single, comprehensive 'signal':

> What other people see when they read what you are thinking and what you are doing, is an artist, an architect, somebody with personality, somebody who dares to be critical, the designer of the Olympic stadium, Ai Qing's son. When all this information converges at a single point, it's easy to be recognised at once. Then, this signal is projected again to the outside world.[47]

The way in which Ai Weiwei expresses his thoughts via blogging and social media is candid and blunt, and it is a style of which he is proud. Transparency and clarity appear as Ai's style of choice. By his own admission, since he began blogging he has chosen to be bolder and more caustic than other bloggers.[48] With his Internet writing Ai Weiwei initially aimed to test to what extent the authorities would care about criticism, and the initial lack of reaction made him believe they were indifferent to his attacks. However one day Sina contacted him and 'politely' asked him to delete a few essays because the company was receiving 'great pressure from outside'. He responded that the very purpose of his starting a blog was to express himself without restrictions, a pursuit he values above everything else. If they wanted to censor him—he dared them—they would have to erase the whole blog from the website.[49]

No response came from the company and the artist continued publishing his bold writings, hoping that his celebrity status would dissuade Sina from a drastic move, but also fearing that every new post would be his last. He realised the situation was becoming increasingly tense when several journalists asked him why he would refuse to delete a few posts, noting that some were excessively outspoken.[50] Ai Weiwei was determined to maintain his blog as intact as possible, and every time he realised an article had been deleted from the blog he posted it again.

According to Ai Weiwei's own account, the censors hindered the popularity and impact of his blog ever since it began. At first, 'they advertised some posts on the home page, just a few, and later they disappeared'. 'Not only did they not actively promote the blog, but a search for my name in Chinese didn't give any results either'. In addition, his name was removed from the list of celebrity bloggers on Sina.com. It is unclear at what point between 2005 and 2009 this occurred. At one point Sina 'closed the discussion board'. This move eliminated one of the key functions of blogging as social media, i.e. the possibility for the blogger to interact with the visitors to the site and for the visitors themselves to discuss a given post. Censorship

46 Recently Ai Weiwei has continued this practice on Instagram (@aiww).

47 Zhai Minglei, Ai Weiwei: Ru ru wu ren zhi jing, p. 50.

48 CNN: 2010. Ai Weiwei on Technology. 4 April 2011. http://edition.cnn.com/video/#/video/international/2010/11/25/icon.ai.weiwei.bk.c.cnn?iref=allsearch (6 December 2011).

49 Zhai Minglei, Ai Weiwei: Ru ru wu ren zhi jing, p. 45.

50 Zhai Minglei, Ai Weiwei: Ru ru wu ren zhi jing, p. 45.

however did not curb Ai Weiwei's desire for self-expression and communication. 'It was sufficient to be able to publish new posts on the blog; having this freedom was enough for me'.[51]

Ai Weiwei agreed with Obrist when the art critic suggested that Ai's blog 'doesn't so much represent reality but produces it'.[52] With regards to the 'productive' nature of blogging, one can draw a parallel with Ai Weiwei's earlier reflections on the nature of photography, in which he argued that the medium had shifted from representation (*mimesis*) to production (*poiesis*) of reality. He argued that 'photography as a practice is no longer a way to record reality, but reality itself':

> Once it has freed itself from its original status of technology and documentation, photography is simply the possibility of turning a wink-long state of existence into a fact. [...] Life is merely an undisputable fact, and production is another fact that has no true relationship with that fact. Both await a miracle to happen: [the miracle is] that meaning is newly questioned.[53]

Ai also warned that 'photography is a deceitful and dangerous medium, and medium is method, medium is meaning'.[54] When looking at his blogs and microblogs it is important to keep in mind their poietical and potentially deceptive nature.[55]

The new reality produced by a blog is theoretically shaped by the will of the individual bloggers and by the real-time interaction with their followers/readers. For Ai Weiwei's blog the greatest limitation to the individual's power over such a production process was the action of the anonymous and unpredictable censor. Ai Weiwei's motive for creating an alternative reality through social media lies in the modification of off-line conditions of existence. These include not only Chinese society and governance, but also social relations in general.

In April 2009 about a hundred posts related to the Sichuan investigation were all excised from the blog. A month later Ai Weiwei's Sina blog posts—together with two other blogs he kept on Sohu.com (Suohu wang 搜狐网) and 163.com (also known as Wang Yi 网易)—were all permanently deleted. By that time his blog boasted twelve million visits.[56]

51 Zhai Minglei, Ai Weiwei: Ru ru wu ren zhi jing, p. 46.

52 Ai Weiwei/Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Ai Weiwei Speaks*, p. 7.

53 Ai Weiwei 艾未未: Sheying 摄影, Sina blog (dated 25 July 2003, posted on 16 January 2006).

54 Ai Weiwei 艾未未: Guanyu sheying 关于摄影, Sina blog (9 February 2006).

55 Media scholar Ben Bachmair has examined the ability of virtual texts to assume a poietical function with regards to reality and individual identity. See Ben Bachmair: Creator spiritus. Virtual Texts in Everyday Life. In: Ulrike H. Meinhof/Jonathan Smith (eds): *Intertextuality and the Media*. Manchester: Manchester University Press 2000, pp. 115–31.

56 On Ai Weiwei's 'activism of communication' see also Giorgio Strafella/Daria Berg: 'Twitter Bodhisattva': Ai Weiwei's Media Politics. *Asian Studies Review* 39:1 (2015), pp. 138–57.

The Commercial Celebrity

Han Han was already a bestselling novelist and a rally driver when he started blogging in 2005. His blog posts on topics such as racing, watching films and other aspects of his daily life immediately attracted hundreds of thousands of readers. Han Han's blog evolved around 2007-2008 by featuring an increasing number of essays commenting on current events and lampooning state authorities and education. Soon Han Han became not only one of China's highest-paid literary authors, but also the world's most popular blogger.

Shortly after Han Han posted three essays on revolution, democracy and freedom that tarnished his image among his most 'liberal' readers[57], his prestige took a hit in 2012 when another blogger alleged that Han Han was not the author of some of the essays on his blog.[58] While the acclaim for his blog subsequently subsided to some extent, Han Han continues to feature in the media and advertising industry. He returned to prominence in 2014 as the director of *Hou hui wu qi* 后会无期 (The continent)—a film that plays with analogies between its characters and Han Han's persona as he did in the novel *San zhong men* 三重门 (Triple door, 2000).

Han Han's celebrity status mainly stems from four factors characterising a new trend in China at the turn of the twenty-first century: First, the popularisation of blogging since the early 2000s; second, the above-mentioned 'trust gap' between official and non-official news sources; third, the presence of a vibrant cultural market, essential for the commercial dimension of his celebrity and a result of the market-oriented reforms introduced in the cultural sphere during the 1990s[59]; and fourth, the expansion of state-enforced boundaries between tolerated speech and sensitive topics in the early 2000s, especially in the cybersphere.[60]

57 I.e. Han Han 韩寒: Tan geming 谈革命. 23 December 2011. http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4701280b0102dz5s.html (24 April 2014); Han Han 韩寒: Shuo minzhu 说民主. 24 December 2011. http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4701280b0102dz84.html (24 April 2014); Han Han 韩寒: Yao ziyou 要自由. 26 December 2011. http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4701280b0102dz9f.html (26 April 2014). See also further in this chapter.

58 Mai Tian 麦田 pointed at the concomitance of the posting times of some of the blogs and the times of Han Han's car races, but retracted his accusations three days later and apologised. The same year, however, another well-known blogger, Fang Zhouzi 方舟子 (Fang Shimin 方是民, b. 1967), alleged that a ghostwriter had authored some of his works. On both of these see Joel Martinsen: Han Han the Novelist versus Fang Zhouzi the Fraud-buster. In: Danwei (1 February), http://www.danwei.com/blog-fight-of-the-month-han-han-the-novelist-versus-fang-zhouzi-the-fraud-buster (7 May 2014); Rui Kunze, Down with the Commercial Idol? The Controversies over Han Han's Authorship and His Blog Texts on Revolution, Democracy, and Freedom (paper presented at the XIX Biennial Conference of the European Association of Chinese Studies, Paris, September 2012).

59 See Kong Shuyu: *Consuming Literature. Best Sellers and the Commercialisation of Literary Production in Contemporary China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press 2005.

60 Around 2007 the state authorities appeared increasingly willing to allow Chinese netizens to interact and debate online. See David K. Herold: Development of a Civic Society Online? Internet Vigilantism and State Control in Chinese Cyberspace. *Asia Journal of Global Studies* 2:1 (2008), pp. 26–37.

Rather than representing a 'pressure cooker' (see above), Han Han's blog generally performs the function of a safety valve.[61] 'Safety valve' blogs capitalise on the CCP's occasional willingness to let netizens comment on and even criticise certain official decisions. This usually applies to issues already featured in the mainstream media, such as local-level malpractice, the Senkaku/Diaoyu 钓鱼 Islands issue and environmental protection. By venting indignation on certain events, a blog 'can act as a safety valve in reducing and channelling social tensions'.[62] While such blogs may re-negotiate the boundaries of official tolerance, as in the case with Han Han's blog, Hassid's distinction between 'pressure cooker' and 'safety valve' blogs complicates the narrative of Han Han as a writer who pushes the state-enforced boundaries between tolerated speech and sensitive topics.[63] Writing about such topics and even criticising the authorities does not necessarily amount to bringing about change in society.

Corruption and ineptitude among local officials constitute a recurring object of satire in Han Han's blog. A post dated 13 April 2012 and accessed over 870,000 times tells eleven short anecdotes about the authorities' misconduct, fraud or clumsiness.[64] The author describes misbehaving local officials quite benevolently:

> Sometimes they are terrifying in their infinite power; sometimes they seem scared and clueless [...]. We applaud when we see a good one and we do not if we meet a bad one, and if we meet a thick one then we laugh and wait for them to shoot themselves in the foot. That is all we can do.[65]

While claiming that the vignettes derive from personal experience, Han Han promises that his 'satirical remarks about funny things' will not reveal actual dates or localities, so the reader can enjoy them 'as a kind of fiction'. Consider one example:

> While I was in a northern county for a race, the racing team arranged for me to have a meal with some officials. On hearing that they were calling for a toast at our table, team members sitting at the next table warned me and said, 'We'll be driving again soon, it would be bad to be found driving under the influence of alcohol'. The officials said, 'Don't worry, that's absolutely no problem, the guy calling for a toast is the head of the traffic police. 'After you're done eating we'll arrange for a sauna, so you can relax a bit before the race, OK? Don't be shy, I'll ask the head of the police department to arrange it, he knows the best places'. [66]

61 See Jonathan Hassid: Safety Valve or Pressure Cooker? A noteworthy exception is Han Han 韩寒: G8 gaosu gonglu G8高速公路. 13 October 2009. http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4701280b0100fc2s.html (19 March 2014).

62 Jonathan Hassid, Safety Valve or Pressure Cooker?, pp. 225–26.

63 On 'boundary pushers' in contemporary China see Rachel E. Stern/Kevin J. O'Brien: Politics at the Boundary. Mixed Signals and the Chinese State. *Modern China* 38:2 (2012), pp. 174–98.

64 Han Han 韩寒: Wo he guanyuan de gushi 我和官员的故事. 13 April 2012. http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4701280b0102e4c3.html (10 April 2014). Han Han also micro-blogged the essay via Sina Weibo as an image: http://www.weibo.com/1191258123/yeockoEpT (10 April 2014), where about 70 thousand other users re-posted it.

65 Han Han, Wo he guanyuan de gushi.

66 Han Han, Wo he guanyuan de gushi.

The portrayal of these officials represents a typical example of how the blog describes Party-state authorities. One may assume that a 'pressure cooker' blog would use a story like this to denounce unprincipled local officials. Rather than soliciting indignation from the reader, the narrator instead highlights the ironical contrast between their official positions and their behaviour. The first person narrator parading as Han Han's persona also leaves the reader in doubt whether he kept drinking or accepted the invitation to enjoy the 'sauna'. The rest of the post places corrupt officials on an equal footing with vainglorious local leaders and Web-illiterate town mayors, without distinguishing between malpractice and ineptitude. The narrator treats them all as objects of ridicule without taking the moral high ground. Like Wang Shuo's 王朔 (b. 1958) novels, Han Han's blog approaches the hypocrisy and shady behaviour of the authorities with sarcasm. Like Wang's, his pose too is 'rebellious yet indifferent'.[67]

In April 2010, following a stabbing in a kindergarten in Taixing 泰兴, Jiangsu 江苏 province, the government announced that 32 people had been wounded but none killed. Online, rumours circulated that some of the children had actually died. Three days after the attack, in a post that has since been deleted from his blog, Han Han wondered: 'Who shall we trust?' The essay accuses the local authorities of preventing parents from seeing their children and withholding information, observing that by doing so they 'succeeded in shifting the public's rage from the killer to themselves'.[68]

The story received wide media coverage and public attention.[69] Han Han's post appeared when interest in the event was at its peak[70], which allowed it to receive maximum attention. While expressing pity for the children and anger against local officials, the author claims to interpret the public's feelings by employing the first person plural. The blog does not blame the authorities for the atrocity, but vents anger against them by recommending 'that all police guarding the doors of local officials nationwide be transferred to guard kindergartens'.[71] While doubting the official account of the event, Han Han balances his criticism by suggesting that online 'rumours' may have exaggerated the number of victims.

While the blog often satirises local authorities and government malpractice, it hardly ever ridicules top Party leaders[72] and never questions important political decisions. It occasionally

67 Paul Clark: *Youth Culture in China. From Red Guards to Netizens.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2012, p. 145.

68 Han Han 韩寒: Haizimen, nimen sao le yeye de xing 孩子们，你闷扫了爷爷的兴. 2 May 2010. http://hanhan.aaronfong.com/2010/05/blog-post.html (3 August 2015).

69 China Media Project: Taizhou Kindergarten Attack. 29 April 2010. http://cmp.hku.hk/2010/04/29/5778/ (26 May 2014).

70 On the 'curve of interest' on sensitive events in China's blogosphere see Xiang Zhou: The Political Blogosphere in China. A Content Analysis of the Blogs Regarding the Dismissal of Shanghai Leader Chen Liangyu. *New Media & Society* 11 (2009), p. 1011.

71 Han Han, Haizimen, nimen sao le yeye de xing.

72 See, for example, Han Han 韩寒: Zhongguo de guoqi tai jianting 中国的国旗太坚挺. 4 June 2007. http://hanh.blogchina.com/302045.html (30 July 2015).

lampoons CCP propaganda language, such as Hu Jintao's 胡锦涛 (b. 1942) 'harmonious society' and 'scientific outlook on development'.[73] Among all government policies, censorship and propaganda practices are some of Han Han's main targets. For instance, in 2010 he posted a satirical chronology of future events in which censorship becomes so extensive that the Internet collapses and the country falls into chaos:

> 2015: Government authorities cut off the Internet altogether and introduce a standard browsing computer that will be the only one allowed to go online. This computer does not have a keyboard port and you receive just a mouse. The slogan of this replacement and re-organisation activity is, 'You only have a mouse, idiot, let's see what you can do'.[74]

As a consequence of the government's reducing the Internet to the *People's Daily* only, the so-called 'fifty-cent army'[75] lose their jobs as pro-government commentators. To protest against their dismissal they stage a hunger strike in Beijing. This passage evokes the 1989 student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square. Han Han's 'prediction' continues by foreseeing a countrywide economic recession and the government's decision to seal China off from the world to fight against 'reactionary forces'—an echo of the Cultural Revolution. The essay disappeared shortly after appearing online, possibly because of the veiled references to such sensitive historical topics.

Han Han's blog can be described as a 'safety valve' also because the author carefully adjusts the amount of discontent and indignation that it releases. He admits practising self-censorship, but believes that by 'loosely' bowdlerising his opinions his blog pushes the boundaries of online censorship.[76] While his most critical essays have suffered censorship—whether by the authorities or the author himself—he has so far managed to keep his blog alive and stay out of jail. Contrary to Ai Weiwei, Han Han does not mind removing a blog post if it saves him from getting into trouble with the authorities.[77] In his essay 'Demanding Freedom' he even promised that if the authorities will 'let culture, publishing, press and cinema be freer', he will refrain from discussing 'sensitive issues in history' or writing about 'senior-level groups

73 See, for example, Han Han 韩寒: Ni weishenme bi wo gui? 你为什么比我贵？ 15 April 2006. http://hanhansports.blog.sohu.com/2207978.html (28 April 2014).

74 Han Han 韩寒: Wo zhi shi caixiang 我只是猜想. 17 January 2010. http://hanhan.aaron-fong.com/2010/01/blog-post_3844.html (3 August 2015).

75 See e.g. Yi Mou/David Atkin/Hanlong Fu: Predicting Political Discussion in a Censored Virtual Environment. *Political Communication* 28:3 (2011), p. 344.

76 In Mathilde Bonnassieux: Han Han, Blogueur le Plus Lu au Monde, Joue avec la Censure. *Rue 89*, 13 March 2010. http://rue89.nouvelobs.com/chinatown/2010/03/13/han-han-le-blogueur-le-plus-lu-au-monde-teste-les-limites-de-la-censure-142656 (10 September 2014).

77 See Loke Wei Sue: Conversation with Han Han, Chinese Blogger (video interview) (2011), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gnM-XES3dRw (5 May 2014).

or their families and their relevant interests', i.e. two of the most sensitive topics in Chinese public discourse.[78]

The moderate and 'pragmatic' criticism of power that the blog stages is part of Han Han's broad celebrity appeal. The blog purports to convey mainstream and commonsensical views on society and politics. Han Han believes that 'most citizens are willing to avoid activism in the belief (...) that "as long as I don't talk about a number of things, I'll be fine and I can go and make money"'.[79] The blogger identifies this worldview as dominant in Chinese society, embracing it in his blogs while posing as the man in the street. This pose, coupled with frequent reminders of his humble background, gives him an everyman appeal.[80]

The blogger's teasing the authorities by broaching sensitive topics combines with his other job as a rally driver to project the image of a bad boy who dares to live dangerously. This persona recalls the hooligans and rascals celebrated by Wang Shuo. Han Han's calculated rebelliousness turns into commercial spectacle when he declares from a magazine cover that he is 'a half-sensitive word'[81], when a Vancl clothing advert portrays him suffering online censorship[82], or when a video advert for a Nestlé product invites viewers to 'live daringly like Han Han!'[83] The success of this rebellious persona and his good looks have earned him the Chinese covers of glossy magazines like *Men's Health* (April 2012) and *Esquire* (May 2009, May 2011, August 2014).[84]

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the ways in which blogging has changed intellectual life in China. The most prominent transformation has been an unprecedentedly wide participation in nationwide conversations about society, culture and even politics. While groups that have traditionally occupied a relatively marginal territory in China's intellectual history such as women, youths and non-Han citizens have benefited from this widening of public discourse,

78 Han Han, Yao ziyou.

79 In Evan Osnos: Han Han Finds a New Crowd to Irritate. *The New Yorker*, 28 December 2011. http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/evanosnos/2011/12/han-han-finds-a-new-crowd-to-irritate.html, (12 May 2014).

80 See Angie Chau: Celebrities in the Internet Age: Han Han's Everyman Appeal (Paper presented at the Conference on China's Domestic Challenges, Fudan University, Shanghai, March 2013).

81 *Kaila* 开啦, May 2010 issue. The founder and editor in chief of *Kaila* was Xu Jinglei (see above in this chapter). *Kaila* ceased publication in 2011.

82 Vancl 凡客: Wo he ni yiyang, dou shi Fanke 我和你一样，都是凡客 (video advertisement) (2011), http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMjQ3OTgxMzg0.html (1 June 2014).

83 Nestlé: Huochu ganxing 活出感性 (video advertisement) (2011), http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMzI-0ODA4MDQ4.html (1 June 2014).

84 On Han Han and the concept of 'commercial celebrity' see also Strafella/Berg, The Making of an Online Celebrity.

when students are not taken into account, blogging appears to represent a mainly white-collar, middle-class activity.[85]

The chapter has identified similarities between unofficial print publications, or *minkan*, and blogs. In particular, one can describe both as 'a collection of miscellaneous texts or images' that—especially in the case of critical speech—encourage the reader to 'overstand' its content. Blogs, like *minkan*, survive by publishing with some regularity. As Jodi Dean puts it, 'the post gets the blog off the ground', 'it keeps it going' and 'when the posts stop, the blog dies'.[86] Blogs and *minkan* also thrive on commenting on events and issues, rather than simply reporting them. Under conditions of restricted freedom of association and publication, both represent a space for alternative expression and fellowship. The most important difference between *minkan* and blogs is the ease with which the latter spread both within and outside China's borders. Finally, beside significant elements of continuity between blogging and pre-Internet *minkan*, one could point to an even longer continuum between blogging, early modern *minjian* political debate,[87] and China's vernacular culture—as opposed to culture that is officially sanctioned and recognised by the state.[88]

By discussing the findings of a survey on blogging behaviour and readership, this chapter has also highlighted a 'trust gap' between blogs and official news outlets, with far more blog readers trusting the truthful nature of blog content than newspaper readers trusting that of official papers. This arguably enhances the role of blogs as non-official platforms to analyse and comment on current events. The survey also reveals a blogosphere dominated by young writers, 55 per cent of them female users. Finally, our survey on the prevalent content of most-visited blogs showed a prominence of stock market and economic news, entertainment and culture.

To explore more in depth the peculiarities of blogging in China, this chapter has examined online writings by Han Han and Ai Weiwei. While different in many respects, these two prominent bloggers display two commonalities. To begin with, blogging has been important in establishing the celebrity status of both, albeit Han Han's celebrity is mostly limited to China and Ai Weiwei appears to be more famous abroad than in his own country. Secondly, both Han Han and Ai Weiwei display trust in the power of blogging as a more direct way of sharing ideas and experiences with the Sinophone world while perhaps also influencing Chinese society. At least at one point in their blogging careers both have believed that blogging could help bring about greater freedom of speech and association. Since the last years of Hu

85 It is worth noting that Internet penetration in the countryside (30.1 per cent), while growing, remains far below the national average (48.8 per cent) and penetration in the cities (64.2 per cent). See CNNIC, Di 36 ci Zhongguo hulian wangluo fazhan zhuangkuang tongji baogao.

86 Jodi Dean: *Blog Theory*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press 2010, p. 47.

87 See Zheng Yongnian's comments in Zhou Yongming, Living on the Cyber Border, p. 799.

88 On vernacular culture, see Glen Dudbridge: *Books, Tales and Vernacular Culture: Selected Papers on China*. Leiden: Brill 2005; Daria Berg: *Women and the Literary World in Early Modern China*. London: Routledge 2013, p. 2ff.

Jintao's rule and especially since Xi Jinping's rise to power in 2012-2013, however, China has been moving in the opposite direction.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that blog and book are not antithetic or inevitably in competition. As the case of novelist-cum-blogger Han Han shows, sometimes they have a symbiotic relationship. It is not rare to witness a successful blog becoming a book—the prestige attached to the book thus arguably affects the status and popularity of blogs and bloggers. In 2003 Muzi Mei's blog diary became a bestselling memoir, *Yiqing shu* 遗情书 (Ashes of love).[89] Essays from Ai Weiwei's blog have been published in book form both in Mainland China[90] and abroad.[91] Han Han has published selected essays from his blog in book form[92] and has edited volumes of short stories by other young authors that previously appeared on his mobile application 'One' (Yige 一个).[93] Fudan University literary scholar Zhu Liyuan 朱立元 (b. 1945) maintains that even writers who publish online yearn, one day, to become the authors of a printed book.[94]

In conclusion, the popularisation of Internet and blogging in China today allows the researcher to access a wealth of insights into the intellectual—and therefore also political—transformation of the country, especially if one avoids narrowly framing the issue as a question of whether blogging will be a catalyst for regime change.[95] Texts from bloggers, micro-bloggers and video-bloggers—as expressions of postmodern discourses that combine elements of global and local, avant-garde and mass culture(s)—represent a goldmine for future research on China's new vernacular culture. Moreover, figures such as Han Han and Ai Weiwei point to how blogging has led to a transformation in the identity of those individuals who can claim to represent the civic and moral 'conscience' (*liangxin* 良心) of Chinese society.

89 Muzi Mei 木子美: *Yiqing shu*遗情书. Beijing: 21 Shiji Chubanshe 2003.

90 Ai Weiwei 艾未未: *Ci shi ci di* 此时此地. Guilin: Guangxi Shifan Daxue Chubanshe 2010.

91 For example, in English: Ai Weiwei/Lee Ambrozy: *Ai Weiwei's Blog.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2011; German: Ai Weiwei/Lee Ambrozy: *Macht Euch Keine Illusionen über Mich. Der Verbotene Blog.* Berlin: Galiani 2014; and Italian: Ai Weiwei: *Il Blog. Scritti, Interviste, Invettive, 2006–2009.* Monza: Johan & Levi 2012.

92 E.g. Han Han 韩寒: *Za de wen* 杂的文. Tianjin: Tianjin Renmin Chubanshe 2014.

93 The app allows users to display short stories and other literary and artistic works on their mobile devices. One such volume is Han Han 韩寒 (ed.): *Xiang de mei* 想得美. Hangzhou: Zhejiang Wenyi Chubanshe 2014. On Han Han's literary app see also Michel Hockx: *Internet Literature in China.* New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 106–7.

94 Interview with the authors, Shanghai, 23 April 2012

95 Rebecca MacKinnon: Flatter World and Thicker Walls? Blogs, Censorship and Civic Discourse in China. *Public Choice* 134 (2008), pp. 31–46.

List of Figures

Contributors

Daria Berg, DPhil (Oxon) (1995) in Chinese Studies, University of Oxford, is Chair Professor (Ordinaria) of Chinese Culture and Society at the University of St.Gallen, Switzerland. She has published extensively on Chinese literature, popular culture and cultural history, including *Carnival in China: A Reading of the Xingshi yinyuan zhuan* (E.J. Brill, 2002). She edited *Reading China: Fiction, History and the Dynamics of Discourse. Essays in Honour of Professor Glen Dudbridge* (E.J. Brill, 2007) and *The Quest for Gentility in China: Negotiations Beyond Gender And Class* (Routledge, 2007). Her latest monograph entitled *Women and the Literary World in Early Modern China, 1580-1700* (Routledge, 2013) won the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) Book Prize 2015 Specialist Publication Accolade. Her joint article with Giorgio Strafella, 'The Making of an Online Celebrity: A Critical Analysis of Han Han's Blog' (2015) won the *China Information* Best Article Prize 2015. Her current research explores urban culture in contemporary China, including the new digital media, literature, art, gender, audio-visual culture and Internet culture.
Email: daria.berg@unisg.ch

Shih-chen Chao, PhD (2013) in Chinese Studies, University of Manchester, currently works as a research IT software engineer and part-time researcher at the University of Manchester. She has published in the areas of cute studies, gender studies, and Internet literature in China. She is also enthusiastic about promoting the notion of 'digital Humanities'.
Email: Shih-Chen.Chao@manchester.ac.uk

Robert E. Hegel, PhD (1973) in Chinese and Japanese Literatures, Columbia University, New York, is Liselotte Dieckmann Professor of Comparative Literature and Professor of Chinese at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, US, where he has taught for more than forty years. His interests include the fiction and theatre, book history and print culture, religious practices, and non-fictional narratives including legal reports of late imperial China (Ming-Qing periods). His publications include *The Novel in Seventeenth-Century China*, *Reading Illustrated Fiction in Late Imperial China* (Columbia University Press 1981), and *True Crimes in Eighteenth-Century China* (University of Washington Press, 2009).
Email: rhegel@wustl.edu

Lena Henningsen, Dr. phil. (2008) in Chinese Studies, University of Heidelberg, is currently Junior Professor at the Institute of Chinese Studies, University of Freiburg, Germany, and member of the German Young Academy. In her research, she focuses on Chinese literature and culture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, including consumer culture in the PRC, Chinese Socialist Realism fiction, intellectual property in the contemporary literary

field and reading practices of the Cultural Revolution. She has published a book entitled *Copyright Matters: Imitation, Creativity and Authenticity in Contemporary Chinese Literature* (Berliner Wissenschaftsverlag, 2010) and is currently working on a project entitled 'Worlds of Reading in China's Long 1970s: Reading and Writing during the Cultural Revolution'.
Email: Lena.Henningsen@sinologie.uni-freiburg.de

Michel Hockx, PhD (1994) in Chinese Studies, Leiden University, is Professor of Chinese Literature and Director of the Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, US. His research interests relate to the sociology of modern Chinese literature, especially the use of new media and the relationship between the literary community and the state. His latest book, *Internet Literature in China*, was published by Columbia University Press in 2015.
Email: Michel.Hockx.1@nd.edu

Rui Kunze, PhD (2012) in Chinese Studies, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, is currently a research fellow at the University of St.Gallen, Switzerland. Her research interests lie in Chinese culture, including print, film and digital media since the late nineteenth century. She has published in the areas of Chinese poetry, science fiction, and Internet culture. Her book *Struggle and Symbiosis: The Canonization of the Poet Haizi and Cultural Discourses in Contemporary China* appeared with Projekt Verlag in 2012. She is currently working on a project on urban culture in twenty-first century China and revising the manuscript of a co-authored book on the culture of science in Maoist China.
Email: rui.kunze@googlemail.com

Cathleen Päthe is a doctoral candidate in the Chinese Studies Department of the University of Erlangen-Nuremburg, Germany. She holds a Master's degree in Chinese studies and library science. Her research interests are the bibliophile world in the late imperial period in China, with libraries, printing history and book culture. Her dissertation explores the social, intellectual and material environment of the collector Qi Chenghan. This research is affiliated to the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin, Dept. III.
Email: catpaethe@gmx.de

Xiang Ren 任翔, PhD (2013) in Communication and Media Studies, Queensland University of Technology, is a research fellow in the Australian Digital Future Institute at the University of Southern Queensland. His research focuses on digital publishing, open scholarship, and China's digital creative economy. Xiang Ren completed his PhD at Queensland University of Technology with an Outstanding Doctoral Thesis Award. Prior to his academic career, Xiang Ren spent more than a decade working in the Chinese publishing industry as a senior editor, sales director, and consultant. He is a well-known digital publishing expert in China

and an invited columnist in leading industrial media such as *China Publishing & Media Journal*, *Science Technology & Publication*, and *Bookdao*.
Email: Xiang.Ren@usq.edu.au

Dagmar Schäfer, PhD (1996) in Chinese Studies, Japanese Studies and Political Science, University of Würzburg, is Director of Department III and Managing Director of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin, Germany, and Professor honoris causa of the History of Technology, at the Technical University, Berlin. Her main interest is the history and sociology of the technology of China, focusing on the paradigms configuring the discourse on technological development, past and present. She has published widely on materiality, the processes and structures that lead to varying knowledge systems, and the changing role of artefacts—texts, objects and spaces—in the creation, diffusion and use of scientific and technological knowledge. Her monograph *The Crafting of the 10,000 Things,* published by the University of Chicago Press in 2011, won the History of Science Society's Pfizer Award in 2012 and the Association for Asian Studies' Joseph Levenson Prize (pre-1900) in 2013. Her current research focuses on the historical dynamics of concept formation, situations, and experiences of action through which actors have explored, handled and explained their physical, social and individual worlds.
Email: dschaefer@mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de

Gregory Adam Scott, PhD (2013) in Religion, Columbia University, is currently a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the University of Edinburgh, UK. His doctoral thesis examined Chinese Buddhist print culture in early Republican China. His current research project focuses on the destruction and reconstruction of Buddhist sacred spaces in China between 1866 and 1966.
Email: gscott23@exseed.ed.ac.uk

Giorgio Strafella, PhD (2014) in Contemporary Chinese Studies, University of Nottingham, is a Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Chinese Culture and Society at the University of St. Gallen. His research focuses on intellectual, political and avant-garde discourses in contemporary China. Strafella is the author of *Intellectual Discourse in Reform Era China: The Debate on the Spirit of the Humanities in the 1990s* (Routledge, 2017) and has published in journals such as *Asian Studies Review* and *China Information*. His joint article with Daria Berg, 'The Making of an Online Celebrity: A Critical Analysis of Han Han's Blog' (2015), won the *China Information* Best Article Prize 2015.
Email: giorgio.strafella@unisg.ch

Hui Faye Xiao, PhD (2009) in East Asian Languages and Cultures, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, is Associate Professor of Modern Chinese Literature and Culture at the University of Kansas, US. She has published a book *Family Revolution: Marital Strife in Contemporary Chinese Literature and Visual Culture* (University of Washington Press, 2014), and articles in *Chinese Literature Today*, *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* (*MCLC*), *Journal of Chinese Cinemas, Journal of Contemporary China, Chinese Films in Focus II*, and *Gender and Modernity in Global Youth Cultures.* Currently she is working on a new book project about youth culture in contemporary China.
Email: hxiao@ku.edu

Winnie L.M. Yee, PhD (2009) in Comparative Literature, Hong Kong University, is Assistant Professor in Comparative Literature at the University of Hong Kong. Her research interests are contemporary Chinese literature and film, Hong Kong culture, independent cinema, the Chinese Diaspora, eco-criticism, literary and cultural theories, world literature, and postcolonial theories. She is co-editor of *Narrating Hong Kong Culture and Identity* (Oxford University Press, 2003) and has published on Hong Kong independent cinema, Chinese writers Yu Jian, Dung Kai-cheung, and Wong Bik-wan in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Her research articles have appeared in *Environment, Space, Place* (forthcoming), *Jump Cut*, *Journal of Urban Cultural Studies*, and *Tamkang Review*, among other places. She is currently working on a manuscript exploring the relationship between eco-poetics and Chinese literature and film, entitled *Of Poetic and Critical Silence: Studies of Independent Cinema in Post-Socialist China*.
Email: yeelmw@hku.hk

Yun Zhu, PhD (2012) in Comparative Literature, University of South Carolina, is an assistant professor of Chinese and Asian Studies at Temple University, Pennsylvania, US. Her research interests focus on Chinese literature and culture from the late Qing era to the contemporary period and women's literature and film. She has published scholarly essays in such journals as *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture* and *Intertexts: A Journal of Comparative and Theoretical Reflection* and has co-authored, with Tan Ye, *Historical Dictionary of Chinese Cinema* (The Scarecrow Press, 2012).
Email: yun.zhu@temple.edu